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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PARODY AND DETECTIVE FICTION

BY

JANICE ELVA MANT

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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The Undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled PARODY AND DETECTIVE FICTION submitted by JANICE ELVA MANT in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

.....
(Supervisor)
.....
.....

Date: 6 April 1987

This is for Colin, with love.

Abstract

Parody has influenced detective fiction from the genre's inception in 1841. In this thesis I examine how parody worked in the creation of the formula, and how self-consciousness almost immediately became part of the formulaic structure. I also study how parody created new strains within the genre, namely female detective fiction and hard-boiled detective fiction; and how already strong parodic structures influence the success of postmodern uses of detective fiction.

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Introduction

On January 20, 1945, in an essay entitled "Who Cares Who Killed Roger Ackroyd?", Edmund Wilson stated with unequivocal fervour his opinion of detective fiction: "With so many fine books to be read, so much to be studied and known, there is no need to bore ourselves with this rubbish" (264-5). Since then, a small but steady body of criticism has evolved with Wilson as mentor. In 1972, Geoffrey H. Hartman announced that:

> . . . the trouble with the detective novel is not that it is moral but that it is moralistic; not that it is popular but that it is stylized; not that it lacks realism but that it picks up the latest realism and exploits it. A voracious formalism dooms it to seem unreal, however "real" the world it describes. (225)

To counteract the views of these critics, who paradoxically study detective fiction in order to dismiss it, many respected authorities have come passionately to the defense of the genre. Jorge Luis Borges has said that "in our chaotic time, there is something that humbly has maintained our classic virtues: the detective story" (Descant 24). Jacques Barzun has called the detective "the last of the heroes." Thus, "it follows that to produce him the author must be at least his equal in observation and vocabulary: wit, learning and repartee constitute the hallmark of detective literature" (Winks 153). In his

influential historical survey of the genre, Julian Symons places the study of detective fiction in a logical light, by comparing detective fiction to Restoration Comedy:

> . . . nobody condemns Restoration comedy outright because it lacks the profundity of Jacobean drama. It is an inferior thing, but a thing with its own particular and unique merits. . . . A double standard of judgement has to be used, . . . so that one can say first of all that the characteristic detective story has almost no literary merit, and second that it may still be an ingenious, cunningly deceptive and finely constructed piece of work. (24)

It would seem that people have been apologizing for the "imperfections" of detective fiction ever since it became recognized as a genre, but with the amount of serious scholarship it has generated in the latter half of this century, one can agree with George N. Dove, who "doubt[s] if it is now necessary to apologize for detective fiction" (205). It is, however, necessary to survey briefly the criticism of the genre that has already appeared in order to situate my own approach to detective fiction. Serious critical study of detective fiction can be seen to fall into three main camps: psychological, socio-cultural, and historical. It is in this order, then, that I wish to discuss them.

Critics who favor the first approach, the psychological, tend to focus on the question of why the genre appeals to readers. The classic essay which tries to answer

this question by means of psychology was written by Dr. Geraldine Pederson-Krag in 1949, and is entitled "Detective Stories and the Primal Scene." Dr. Pederson-Krag defines "the unique feature of the mystery story" as "the intense curiosity it arouses" (15). She parallels the act of reading a plot concerning a victim, a secret crime, and an unlikely murderer with a subconscious reliving of the child's terror at witnessing the sexual coupling of his parents. The reader/child identifies with the detective, the victim represents the parent for whom the child harbours negative oedipal feelings, and the murderer is "the parent toward whom the child's positive oedipal feelings were directed, the one whom the child wished least of all to imagine participating in a secret crime" (16). She attributes the addiction to the formula to a capacity for voyeurism; "the voyeur is never entirely satisfied with his peeping which he has the compulsion endlessly to repeat like the detective story addict who rereads the same basic mystery tale without tedium" (18).

Other psychological approaches to detective fiction combine erotic theories of literature with theories on violence. Dennis Porter encapsulates this trend:

> Aggression, like eroticism, begins in the cradle. And in the imaginative reenactment of our pursuit of pleasure, it turns out that a tale of aggression has as much appeal as a tale of eroticism. . . . The lesson of popular fiction is that the goal of a coupling is no more common than the destruction of an enemy as a source of pleasure. . . . From the

> point of view of their power to arouse, therefore, the representation of crime overcome is an alternative to sex, not a substitute. (104)

While psychoanalytic theories pertaining to literature can be appealing, John G. Cawelti has pinpointed the great weakness of such readings:

> They depend on an a priori assumption that a particular social or psychological dynamic is the basic cause of human behavior. If it is the case that, for example, unresolved childhood sexual conflicts generate most adult behavior, then it does not really explain anything to show that the reading of detective stories is an instance of such behavior. The interpretation does not go beyond the original assumption, except to show how the form of the detective story can be interpreted in this way. But the only means of proving that the detective story should be interpreted in this way is through the original assumption. (25)

Critics who espouse psychological theories tend to trace the roots of detective fiction as far back as the Greeks (e.g. Oedipus) and various Biblical riddle stories. Critics who favor a socio-cultural approach to the genre usually set the birthdate of detective fiction as 1841, the year Edgar Allan Poe's "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was first published. Mystery, puzzles and various acts of deduction can be found in earlier literature, but it is not until the mid-nineteenth century that detective fiction flourished for the simple reason that, until that

time, there was no such thing as a detective. Scholars like Stephen Knight and Ian Ousby effectively trace the metamorphosis from criminal hero (such as Robin Hood, Dick Turpin, or Jonathan Wild) to detective hero, by noting the decline of horrific public punishments and the rise of the stability-seeking middle classes. As Dennis Porter explains:

> . . . by the 1840s a greater diffusion of the nation's wealth into the middle and lower-middle classes resulted in a form of embourgeoisement that led to a more positive perception of the forces of order. Politically, also, the enlargement of the suffrage after 1832 involved a broader section of the population in the making of the laws they were compelled to obey. As a consequence, the most visible class features of the law tended to disappear.(149-50)

According to this view, the Age of Reason gave birth to the Great Detective, an individual who could unravel any puzzle and counter every mysterious happening with a logical explanation. Scientific method became the new religion, and those characters who could think through the maze of a puzzling murder and determine the answer from their armchairs became the new prophets. The Great Detective was to reign supreme as the king of detective fiction until after the First World War.

Beyond sociological reasons for the inception of detective fiction, scholars within this discipline tend to focus on several other points of common interest. These include: the identifiable properties of the Great Detec-

tive, and what makes this usually outrageously eccentric dilettante popular;[1] the historical precedents which make the British country village or "manor house" mysteries popular, and the disparate social factors which created a demand for the "hard-boiled private eye" in the United States;[2] the examination of the social appeal of formulaic structure;[3] qualified comparisons to the shared audience appeal of other genres such as fairy tales, fables,[4] games,[5] and comedies of manners;[6] and various predictions of what will happen to the detective novel of the future.[7]

It is true that the most innovative and scholarly of all critical work on detective fiction can be found in the body of work labelled socio-cultural study. The only criticism to be made of this group is that, with a few exceptions, the scholars seem inclined to turn the genre into sociological fodder, instead of adapting their socio-cultural tools to purposes of literary criticism. The reason for this focus is elementary: detective fiction is almost universally recognized as sub-literary, and therefore unworthy of serious literary analysis.

Perhaps it is not the issue of literary merit so much as the proven popularity of detective fiction that has led to several first-class historical surveys. While the time-span of the genre covers only 150 years, the sheer volume of material to choose from means that most surveys share very few common denominators. The two most respected his-

torians of the genre are Howard Haycraft and Julian Symons.

Haycraft's Murder for Pleasure was published in 1941, and therefore does not take into account any hard-boiled writers after Dashiell Hammett, but he discusses the conventional chronology from Poe to the end of the Golden Age. As a purist, he forbids thrillers and spy stories entrance to the genre. Symons' Bloody Murder: From the Detective Story to the Crime Novel was first published in 1972, with a revised edition released in 1985. It is not a mere continuation of Haycraft's history, but a convincingly argued rebuttal to Haycraft's hopes for the purity of the puzzle novel. Symons expands the genre's family tree by including William Godwin's Caleb Williams (1794) as a forerunner to the modern detective novel, and discusses minor writers who, as contemporaries of Dickens and Collins, reflected the trends that were being set in the late nineteenth century. At the other end of the spectrum, Symons, from his vantage point of writing thirty years later than Haycraft, does justice to the American hard-boiled school; he also sees fit to include police procedural novels, crime novels, irreverently comic renditions (which he labels members of the "Farceur" school), and postmodernist uses of detective fiction conventions.

Most literary critics agree that Poe must be credited with the invention of the detective story, and the disagreements about what must or must not be included in

the canon are helpful only in that they pinpoint a given critic's idiosyncrasies. The one issue that it seems imperative to take a stand on when discussing the genre as a whole concerns the turning points in its development. A perfect example of such a turning point is the birth of the hard-boiled school: did it evolve from the Golden Age of the Great Detective, or is it a hybrid--a cross between the popular detective puzzle mystery and the American romantic tradition?

How one resolves this question depends greatly on how one views the genealogy of literature as a whole. While it is safe to say that certain forms dominate in certain eras, can we assume that the previous reigning style or genre disappears completely when its successor comes into vogue? I think not. The "Balzacian" novel is still being written and enjoyed by readers, no matter what the new novelists say to the contrary.[8] Likewise, Golden Age detective fiction is still being written, in tandem with both hard-boiled novels and postmodernist "antidetective" novels.[9] The genealogical pictorial analogy of a tree is useful: Godwin and the Gothics are the roots; Poe, Dickens and Collins form the trunk; and each branch, complete with its own offshoots, carries a remarkable family resemblance to the others. With this concept in mind, I think it is possible to resolve the problem of sequential changes and developments in the genre. One can interpret each new development within the genre as an evolutionary point in

the history of detective fiction without requiring a complete transmogrification of the formula which remains, essentially: a crime, a detective, and an answer of sorts.

As defined, the psychological approach attempts to answer the question of why we read detective fiction. So does the socio-cultural approach, but as well it addresses the questions of why the formula is so massively popular, and why literature of this sort came to be written. An historical survey, of course, tells us what has been written where and when. The question still to be asked is "how": how does the genre generate new material within each sub-genre, how do these sub-genres evolve, how does the formula plot stay true without becoming tiresome? Cawelti sees these changes occurring in response to changes in the cultural climate (51), but I do not consider this explanation to be the complete answer. I would argue that there is also an internal dynamic within the genre that aids in its propagation and flexibility. It is my hypothesis that we will discover parody to be a key tool in the development of the popular formulaic genre known as detective fiction.

Before advancing any argument regarding parody as an instrumental factor in the growth of the genre of detective fiction, it is necessary to define the term "parody." This may seem a simple task, but, although everyone be-

lieves he knows the meaning of the word "parody," as yet, there has been no consensus on a concise definition. There is, first of all, the Oxford English Dictionary definition:

> A composition in prose or verse in which the characteristic turns of thought and phrase in an author or class of authors are imitated in such a way as to make them appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to ludicrously inappropriate subjects; an imitation of a work more or less closely modeled on the original, but so turned as to produce a ridiculous effect. (489)

This definition has often been called into question, because it is based on only one of the two meanings of the etymological root of "parody." J. Hillis Miller explains the ambiguity of the word "parody" (from the Greek "parodia") by defining "para" as a

> . . . double antithetical prefix signifying at once proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority, something inside. . . and at the same time outside, . . . something simultaneously this side of a boundary line, threshold or margin, and also beyond it. (219, Conlon 221-2)

As Linda Hutcheon suggests, this double meaning allows parody to cut both ways; it can either refer to "counter" or "against" or it can mean "beside" (as in parallel) and therefore provide "a suggestion of an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast" (Parody 32). In light of this expanded etymology, we can free parody from the constant

need to ridicule.

Clearer differences can be established between parody and other terms with which it is often associated: travesty, burlesque, pastiche and satire. This differentiation has recently become an important task; with the advent of postmodernism, which can be identified predominantly by its overwhelmingly self-reflexive nature, parody has resurfaced as a major literary term.

Fowler makes the distinction that while parody, travesty and burlesque can often be used synonymously, burlesque and parody had "each a special province; action or acting is burlesqued,. . . and verbal expression is parodied." In contrast, "travesty differs from the others both in having no special province, and in being more used than they when the imitation is meant to be an exact one but fails" (68). Therefore, travesty refers to failed imitation, while burlesque implies the inclusion of a joke, "burlare" being the Italian for "to ridicule."

In her attempt to distinguish between this abundance of confusingly similar terms, Margaret Rose has made this observation about the term "pastiche":

> This term is taken from the painting term "pasticcio analogen," and means the compilation of motives from several works. There is little inference of the discrepancy typical of parody in such a term, or of the critical refunctioning of texts found in parodistic works.("Defining Parody" 14)

Sanda Golopentia-Eretescu makes the distinction between parody and pastiche in this way: "Le pastiche renforce, la parodie sape la textualité d'election" (125).

The term "parody" is most often confused with satire. Linda Hutcheon believes that this is so because, although distinct, "the two genres are often used together" (Parody 43). Joseph A. Dane states that "parody deals with literary norms (collective understanding of a text or genre), while satire deals with social norms" (153). This seems to be an apt explanation of Vladimir Nabokov's playful aphorism: "Satire is a lesson, parody is a game" (Strong Opinions 75).

The above examples suggest that the most popular method for defining parody has been to determine what it is not rather than what it is. It is not travesty, for travesty is failed imitation; neither is it burlesque, because burlesque requires ridicule while ridicule is merely an option for parody. Pastiche refers to a collage of various forms, rather than a parody of any form in particular; and satire is a literary form of social criticism rather than literary criticism.

There are critics, however, who have recognized the importance of parody and have made an attempt to define it as a positive force. The school of criticism known as Russian Formalism in general, and critic Jurij Tynjanov in particular, view parody as "a lever of literary change" (Erlich 165), and a "sign of emancipation, indeed an act

of literary 'warfare'"(Erlich 225). While many critics and theorists will grant to parody an element of literary criticism, J. Gerald Kennedy comes closest to the Russian Formalists when he labels parody "exorcism":

> Precisely because great writing weighs upon subsequent writers, exacting the tribute of conscious or unconscious emulation, any author who wishes to establish his own voice must come to terms with the "enemy"--the genius of his predecessors. (166-7)

Formalist criticism takes this individual exorcism one step further: the presence of parody indicates another step in the evolution of literature as a whole. As Victor Erlich explains, to the Formalist critic, parody is:

> . . . how literary change comes about. The old is presented, as it were, in a new key. The obsolete device is not thrown overboard, but repeated in a new, incongruous context, and thus either rendered absurd through the agency of mechanization or made "perceptible" again. In other words, a new art is not an antithesis of the preceding one, but its reorganization, a "regrouping of the old elements."(226)

More recently, Linda Hutcheon has devoted herself to the discovery of a positive definition of the term, and has done an admirable job of winnowing through the various explanations of parody to synthesize them into a useful working definition:

> . . . parody is repetition, but repetition that includes difference; it is imitation with critical ironic distance, whose irony can cut both

> ways. Ironic versions of "trans-contextualization" and inversion are its major formal operatives, and the range of pragmatic ethos is from scornful ridicule to reverential homage. (Parody 37)

With these definitions in mind, it is possible to see parody as a positive influence on literature. At the same time that it acknowledges its predecessors, a parodic work carves out its own territory by means of a delicate critical distancing. Through self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness, a parodic work repeats "in a new, incongrous context" (Erlich 226), and thus acknowledges a debt at the same time that it "exorcises" what has gone before. Irony is also a major component of a parodic work. As Hutcheon argues, because of the structural similarities between parody and irony, "parody can use irony easily and naturally as a preferred, even privileged, rhetorical mechanism" (Parody 54). While there has been much thought devoted to parody, most critics discuss the term as a genre rather than a literary device. Margaret Rose, however, is an exception to this tendency. In Parody/Metafiction, her study of intertextuality in a range of post-modernist works, she has shown that a device which is parodic (according to my definition above) can be an important element in texts which are not primarily parodies.

I wish to follow Rose's lead to examine how parodic elements work within detective fiction, and how certain

features of parody affect and structure this literary genre. There are several reasons to believe that parody is at work within the genre of detective fiction. The first indication is that detective fiction creates the context necessary to audience recognition of parody. Readers of detective fiction often read widely within the genre. It is safe to assume that such "addicted" readers are likely to have read or recognize allusions to the original of any given parody. This pre-knowledge is necessary to the appreciation of parody. As J.G. Riewald says, since

> . . . the recognition of the original is a primary condition of the integral enjoyment of parody, it must be granted that the reader who is ignorant of the original is severely handicapped. (128)

Furthermore, because of the imitative nature of parody, it is especially interesting to study its effects and uses in an inherently formulaic genre. There are striking similarities between Cawelti's definition of a successful formulaic work, as ". . . in addition to the pleasure inherent in the conventional structure, it brings a new element into the formula, or embodies the personal vision of the creator" (12), and Linda Hutcheon's definition of parody as "repetition that includes difference" (37). This is not to say that all formulaic fiction is parodic in nature, but it does lend credence to the study of parody within a formulaic genre.

There is parody at work within the specific formula

of a detective narrative as well as within the larger aspect of the genre as a whole. As Lacan has stated, the basic formula of a detective novel is one in which the detective's actions parody those of the murderer (21-54). In his ability to deduce the criminal's actions, or "reconstruct the scene of the crime," the detective effects a repetition that includes difference. The ironic and incongrous effect is that the character who embodies ultimate good (the detective)is the only character who can understand ultimate evil.

Also central to the formula are "red herrings," which are parodies of clues. These ultimately unimportant details must be enough like real clues to confuse the reader; but they must also contain enough of a difference from real clues to keep the reader from claiming foul play on the part of the author. Red herrings emphasize the importance placed on reading correctly, and also ironically delineate the fine line between appearance and reality which is the essence of both parody and detection.

Another parodic element often found within the formula is the slow-witted partner of the Great Detective. There is, of course, a sense in which the Watson character is merely a foil. As Julian Symons says:

> [Poe] established the convention by which the brilliant intelligence of the detective is made to shine even more brightly through the comparative obtuseness of his friend who tells the story. (38)

As well as serving this function, however, this secondary character so often found in detective fiction fulfills another, parodic, function. He situates the reader in terms of the text by portraying a parodic example of a naive reader. As Margaret Rose writes:

> . . . the parodist creates a situation whereby the reader must also relate to himself as an object of the author's discourse if he is to understand the status of other objects represented in the fiction. He must, that is, see his own world through the image of himself, the reader, in the text before him, as a part of a fiction which, as he himself, has taken on a different form than in the world of objects. (P/M 65)

As indicated, there are various ways in which parody functions within the genre of detective fiction. In order to discover if parody works systematically throughout the genre, I will examine some stages in the formula's development which are generally seen as crucial by Cawelti, Porter, and Symons. My question of each of these stages is, "Has parody enabled this development to occur and, if so, in what way?"

The first chapter therefore deals with the inception of the genre. A study of selected works by Edgar Allan Poe, Wilkie Collins, Fergus Hume, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, will delineate the function of parody in two ways: as the catalyst (by way of mocking both the novel of manners and the gothic) which creates a new genre, and as the means of establishing one's unique authority within

the limited parameters of a prescribed form.

The focus of the second chapter will be on female writers of detective fiction. Specifically, I will examine how female authors, as well as utilizing the same parodic devices as their male counterparts, also develop a parodic, self-conscious formula unique to themselves.

Chapter Three will discuss the hard-boiled school of detective fiction. A study of Raymond Chandler's works will highlight how this offshoot from the Golden Age formula came into existence through means of parody; and an examination of the infusion of realism into the stylized formula will show the parodic metamorphosis of the infallible great detective into the wisecracking urban loner. As well, three other specific writers will be examined for their individual parodic inversions of the prototypical private eye: Howard Engel, with his "soft-boiled" Benny Cooperman; Ted Wood, who brings an urban violence into a rural setting; and Sue Grafton, creator of a tough female private eye.

The final chapter will deal, not with parodies within the genre, but with postmodernist parodies of the genre. Selected works by Umberto Eco, Tom Berger, Jorge Luis Borges, Alain Robbe-Grillet and Thomas Pynchon will be studied to determine both the effects of parody upon the genre of detective fiction, and the reasons for detective fiction (as opposed to other formulaic genres) being the most popular victim of the postmodernists.

By means of examination within these four distinct areas in the popular genre of detective fiction, it is hoped that parody will be revealed as an important literary device for establishing certain elements of the formula, generating new directions within the genre, and maintaining the popularity of the formula itself.

Chapter One:
The Beginning

In his essay entitled "From Poe to Valery" (1948), T.S. Eliot remarked that, "as far as detective fiction is concerned, nearly everything can be traced to two authors: Poe and Wilkie Collins"(208). This statement indicates that a study of the genre would not be complete without an examination of the works of both these luminaries, as well as a look at the influence they wielded on those writers who followed. It can be seen that the genre now known as detective fiction came about partially due to a perceived need for rational and logical solutions within the sensational and gothic horror novels popular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The patterns developed by Poe, Collins and, to a lesser extent, Charles Dickens almost immediately became formulaic. The focus of the latter part of this chapter will be on the parodic self-consciousness which invaded the formula almost from its inception. The two authors who display this early self-consciousness in their work are Fergus Hume and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

While the four "tales of ratiocination" ("The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Purloined Letter," "The Goldbug," and "The Mystery of Marie Roget") are Poe's only detective stories, we must take note of his stance as a critic as well as an author to determine how instrumental parody was

on the birth of detective fiction. Many scholars, including W. H. Auden, saw Poe as a self-appointed guardian of good taste and clear writing. Robert Daniel, in his article entitled "Poe's Detective God," connects Poe's critical stance to his literary work, in a way reminiscent of the Russian Formalist definition of parody as critical tool. He states:

> There are several ways in which the detective stories appear to be extensions of Poe's criticism. As a reviewer he is very much the sleuth-hound; he ferrets out plagiarism, and hunts down writers guilty of bad taste, confused thinking, or the murder of the language. Contrariwise, the detective stories may be regarded as essays in criticism. (105)

Daniel's reading of the tales of ratiocination as literary criticism equates with the Russian Formalist definition of parody as literary criticism, in which "the obsolete device is not thrown overboard, but repeated in a new, incongruous context, and thus either rendered absurd through the agency of mechanization or made 'perceptible' again" (Erlich 226). In order, however, to accept Daniel's statement we must examine Poe's focus as a literary critic. As well, we must examine whether or not the tool of parody was used by Poe in the way in which the Russian Formalists have defined and prescribed.

The crux of Poe's critical stance is that he unites the two opposing forces of rationalism and imagination.

David Ketterer explains this undercurrent present in Poe's tales of ratiocination. Poe distrusted reason because he considered "imagination [to be] the only avenue to a perception of ideality and reason being largely responsible for man's state of deception" (238). Privileging the imagination did not mean, however, that reason had no place in the work of an artist. Poe waged war on artists who he believed used "slovenly diction" (Auden xiii) or suffered from "confused thinking" (Daniel 105). Poe developed a theory of artistic synthesis between the two states. Both the declaration and the demonstration of this position are to be found in the tales of ratiocination. It is Dupin's companion, the narrator, who says it most succinctly, in the opening of "The Murders in the Rue Morgue": "It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the truly imaginative never otherwise than analytic" (179).

By examining the synthesis of reason and imagination in his tales of ratiocination, Poe accomplished two things. He imposed standards of quality onto tales of gothic and sensational horror. No longer could writers indulge in horrific sequences for sensation's sake alone. In sticking Mademoiselle L'Espanaye up the chimney upside down in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe had outdone any horror imaginable. By deducing a logical reason for this terrifying action, he challenged writers to be responsible for their creative powers. He had proved that a

reasonable explanation could be just as terrifying and far more believable than an unexplained phenomenon. It is important to note that Poe did not dismiss elements of the sensational; by using horror and intrigue to tell a story of rationality, he made it impossible for readers to be satisfied with the old formula. As Erlich describes parody according to the Russian Formalists, Poe created a new formula that was "not an antithesis of the preceding one, but its reorganization, a 'regrouping of the old elements'" (226).

As well as imposing standards on gothic thrillers, Poe developed the prototype for all detective fiction that was to follow. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" is the first locked room mystery, a style which John Dickson Carr later personalized with his detective, Dr. Gideon Fell. "The Murder of Marie Roget" is the first example of the armchair detective. Baroness Orczy's Old Man in the Corner is the most famous descendant of this line, though Agatha Christie's Miss Marple might be said to indulge in this sport from time to time. One of the basic rules of detective fiction is that the most unlikely answer will be the correct answer. The acknowledged prototype for this is Poe's "The Purloined Letter." "The Gold-Bug," which involves M. Legrand rather than the amazing Dupin, is based on Poe's love of cryptography. Without it, Dorothy L. Sayers' Have His Carcase might not have been written.

Poe used his tales of ratiocination as vehicles for

literary criticism, and his favorite critical device seems to have been irony. It is in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" that the infamous argument proving chess to be an inferior game to checkers or whist is found. Stephen L. Mooney sees this thread of irony throughout Poe's writing. He states:

> His mode is irony. The serious disguises of so many of the tales that are comic in origin, and the comic disguises of the serious, are his ratiocinative discovery of himself as Eiron. (295)

While Mooney and other scholars who follow this line make a case for Poe as ironist, my argument for Poe as parodist does not rely merely upon the family resemblances between parody and irony. It is the recontextualized nature of the stories of ratiocination which prove Poe a parodist in the Russian Formalist sennse. If Poe was arguing ironically for the need for rational thought and discipline in the creation of Art, he was also wielding a "lever of literary change" (Erlich 165) when he set the patterns for the tremendously popular genre known as detective fiction that would be followed for the next 150 years.

If Edgar Allan Poe is the father of the detective story, then Wilkie Collins is the father of the detective novel. The two works he is best known for, The Woman in White (1860) and The Moonstone (1868), are the prototypes for the mystery thriller and the detective novel, respectively. Collins takes the basic recipe for the sensational

gothic thriller and, like Poe, uses the ingredients to devise a new and far more satisfying concoction.

The Woman in White contains various essential elements from the standard sensational novel of the time (Symons 43-49). These include: a case of switched and mistaken identity, kidnapping, drugs, true love and a dusty and unused wing of a manor house. There is even an insane asylum thrown in for good measure. Two additions to this list are what signaled Collins as an innovator: Count Fosco, an evil mastermind the likes of whom literature had never seen, and the fact that, for all the mysterious and horrific events which occur throughout the novel, the seeds of plausibility and rationality are sown from the beginning. In this latter respect, Collins differed from Poe in the degree of his consistency; while Poe privileged rationality, there have been countless articles which have proved that Dupin could not have seen the address on the purloined letter, the Rue Morgue orangutan could not have reached the shutter from the drainpipe, and Mary Rogers likely took her own life. Collins, on the other hand, does not suffer from similar attacks. It seems that every clue is planted from the beginning, and no loose ends are left trailing.

Collins had trained in law; this discipline is perhaps what persuaded him to use the technique of switching narrators throughout the novel. Each narrator speaks of only what he could have known at the time; although the

narrating characters know the ultimate truth as they relate the story, they are honour-bound not to reveal the conclusion until the reader is apprised of all the facts in the case. In the Preface to The Woman in White, Collins writes:

> . . . the story here presented will be told by more than one pen, as the story of an offense against the laws is told in Court by more than one witness--with the same object, in both cases, to present the truth always in its most direct and most intelligible aspect. (1)

Multiple narrators create a built-in self-consciousness in the text which, paradoxically, enforces the plausibility of the situation.

Collins often pushed this self-consciousness to the extreme. A case in point is the first narrator of The Moonstone, Gabriel Betteredge. Betteredge himself believes in the power and veracity of literature. He shows that a novel can be as powerful as scripture through his own example of discovering truths in rereadings and consultations with his wellworn copy of Robinson Crusoe.

> I have tried that book for years--generally in combination with a pipe of tobacco--and have found it my friend in need in all the necessities of this mortal life. When my spirits are bad--Robinson Crusoe. When I want advice--Robinson Crusoe. In past times, when my wife plagued me; in present times, when I have had a drop too much--Robinson Crusoe. I have worn out six stout Robinson Crusoes with hard work in my service. On my lady's last

> birthday she gave me a seventh. I took a drop too much on the strength of it; and Robinson Crusoe put me right again. (34-5)

In the fifth chapter of his narrative, Betteredge makes a highly self-conscious statement to the reader:

> Here follows the substance of what I said, written out entirely for your benefit. Pay attention to it, or you will be all abroad, when we get deeper into the story. Clear your mind of the children, or the dinner, or the new bonnet, or what not. Try if you can't forget politics, horses, prices in the City, and grievances at the club. I hope you won't take this freedom on my part amiss; it's the only way I have of appealing to the gentle reader. Lord! haven't I seen you with the greatest authors in your hands, and don't I know how ready your attention is to wander when it's a book that asks for it, instead of a person? (54)

This passage is remarkably similar to the opening paragraph of Italo Calvino's postmodernist novel, If on a Winter's Night a Traveler (1979):

> You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, If on a winter's night a traveler. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away,"No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice--they won't hear you otherwise--"I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" (3)

The difference between these two passages, both parodies of the standard evocation to the gentle reader, is that Calvino's opening automatically creates a barrier between

the text and the reader who wishes merely to sink into a fiction. It challenges the reader to participate rather than merely read. This postmodernist barrier is created by means of the voice Calvino uses, the voice of the implied author. Collins is doing something different. True, he is parodying the Richardsonian style of appealing to the reader to demonstrate the truth of what is written, but at the same time he is creating a convincing portrait of someone who has been asked to relate the truth as he witnessed it. By using multiple narrators rather than an omniscient unseen storyteller, Collins has already created an atmosphere of veracity; once he has established this reality for his readers, he can parody the wooden stylistic devices of others with impunity. By inserting his authorial address to the reader, Calvino raises the question of his narrative's plausibility. Collins is self-conscious about the form of his narrative, but only in order to prove that the substance of his narrative is true.

Poe played with the possibilities of detective fiction, but quickly tired of the genre. Collins, likewise, ventured into new areas (without as much success) after The Moonstone. Gavin Lambert says of Collins, "he was the first to grasp [the mystery novel's] expressive possibilities. The genre became personal with Th Woman in White and mechanical soon afterwards"(ix). Perhaps it was this fear of the mechanical that kept these innovators from

continuing to write in the genre they had helped to forge. Needless to say, many writers were willing to jump into the breach. Detective fiction became, and has remained, one of the most popular genres of formulaic fiction. Parody and self-consciousness, tools which helped to create the genre, continued as elements of the genre. A study of two early practitioners of the genre will show how parody quickly became an element of the formula itself: an element designed both to foster credibility and to generate new material within the highly mechanical formula.

The history of detective fiction is studded with successful practitioners of the craft who denigrated both the genre and their own fame within it. This seeming distaste occurred very early, but made no difference to the proliferation of the genre, or indeed, the productivity of the particular authors. A case in point is that of the Australian writer Fergus W. Hume.

Although the name Fergus W. Hume does not conjure up the same recognition as that of his contemporary, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, at one time his mystery work entitled The Mystery of the Hansom Cab (1886) outsold the Sherlock Holmes stories. Hailed as the best-selling mystery novel of the nineteenth century, Hume's first foray into detective fiction was written, not for any special love of the form, but to make his name known in order to advance his career as a budding playwright. In a preface written in

1896 (ten years after Cab was first published), Hume describes the manner in which he came to write the book:

> I enquired of a leading Melbourne bookseller what style of book he sold most of. He replied that the detective stories of Gaboriau had a large sale; and as, at this time I had never heard of this author, I bought all his works...and read them carefully. The style of these stories attracted me, and I determined to write a book of the same class; containing a mystery, a murder, and a description of low life in Melbourne. This was the origin of the "Cab." (8)

Hume never became a playwright. He wrote over a hundred more thrillers, and though none of them reached the popularity of the Cab, he made a comfortable living.

The Mystery of the Hansom Cab is indeed a respectable mystery novel, but it is the manner by which Hume claimed to have written it that makes it of interest to us today. One can infer from his explanation that, even as early as 1886, the detective novel had reached such a stage of formulization that any reasonably intelligent wordsmith could manufacture one, given an accurate recipe. Almost from its inception, the detective genre was relegated to the readership that Wilkie Collins had once named the "unknown public" (Symons 42). Detective fiction was not serious literature, and no serious writer, no matter how much he might profit from it, could admit to championing it. By denigrating the genre, Hume insinuated that he indeed was a serious writer who had, to crib from Oliver

Goldsmith, "stooped to conquer." The implication was that a detective novel written by an author who realized how inconsequential such novels were could not be of the same low stature as most detective novels. Like many writers who were to come, Hume managed, by this subtle subterfuge, to claim superior status for his novel which actually followed the hateful formula stringently.

Self-consciousness, which Wilkie Collins had used to plead the plausibility of his narrative, was now being used to distinguish one's novel from the morass of the formulaic. In the Cab, reference is made to other works of detective fiction in a very self-conscious way. One would assume that this reminder to the reader of the existence of the genre would necessarily harm the verisimilitude attempted by the author of said work. In postmodernist fiction, self-consciousness is used deliberately to highlight the fictionality of the work in which it appears. However, in detective fiction, a peculiar double negative effect seems to occur. References to fictional works, and especially those within the same genre, enhance, rather than deny the reality of the given novel. In much the same way as the play-within-the-play structure gives credence to the outer drama which frames the interior "fiction," references to fiction within detective novels extend the distance between the acknowledged formulaic genre and the particular example at hand. "If this were a detective plot, I should expect so-and-so to be the

murderer, but. . ." is a familiar utterance to mystery readers. Statements such as these remind the reader forcefully of the formulaic and predictable nature of the genre, but, in addition, they imply that the story that houses them is superior to such conventions. The argument is as convincing as it is fallacious: detective novels follow an obvious and predictable formula; if this were such a novel, it would not speak disdainfully of its ilk; therefore this is not such a novel. Hume is no stranger to this ploy.

> "Puts one in mind of The Leavenworth Case, and all that sort of thing," said Felix, whose reading was of the lightest description. (48)
>
> "Murdered in a cab," he said, lighting a fresh cigarette, and blowing a cloud of smoke. "A romance in real life, which beats Miss Braddon hollow." (56)
>
> "But do you know anything of the detective business?" someone would ask.
> "Oh, dear yes," with an airy wave of his hand; "I've read Gaboriau, you know; awfully jolly life, 'tectives." (88)

The key to a successful detective novel, which Fergus W. Hume (and countless writers who have since followed him) discovered, seems to be this: follow the formula to the letter, and deny doing so at every turn.

While Hume had followed Collins by concentrating on the persona of the law officer or professional as detec-

tive, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle turned back to Edgar Allan Poe and Gaboriau for his models. As Ian Ousby states: "Doyle's achievement was to create a stereotype of the private detective as complete and as expressive of its time as the earlier stereotype of the police detective had been" (136). Sherlock Holmes owes much to the Chevalier Auguste Dupin who dislikes the sun, lives in seclusion, and astounds his companion/narrator with his acts of rational deduction. Holmes, too, is an eccentric: he is a cocaine addict, plays the violin, is insufferably arrogant, demonstrates misogynistic tendencies, and indulges in elaborate disguises. In his memoirs, Conan Doyle acknowledged his debt to Poe, but Holmes himself made clear what he thought of the comparison in A Study in Scarlet:

> Now, in my opinion, Dupin was a very inferior fellow. That trick of his of breaking in on his friends' thoughts with an apropos remark after a quarter of an hour's silence is really very showy and superficial. He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine . (Vol.1, 24)

Sherlock Holmes may then be considered a parody of Auguste Dupin, in the sense that Doyle recontextualized many features of Poe's logical hero. He is similar in order to qualify for the position of Great Detective; he is different from his predecessor in order to justify his existence as a separate entity. He is a repetition with a difference (Hutcheon 37); he is a "reorganization" of

Dupin, to make him perceptible again (Erlich 226); he is Doyle's way of "coming to terms with the genius of his predecessors" (Kennedy 166). The above passage not only demonstrates the previously discussed disparagement of similar fiction to enhance the position of one's own; it also shows how the great detective often owes his creation to the detectives who go before.

The passage also highlights another feature often found in the make-up of fictional detectives of the "great detective" mold--eccentricity. As Conan Doyle's brother-in-law, E.W. Hornung (creator of Raffles) once humorously penned: "Though he might be more humble, there's no police like Holmes" (Symons 85). Arrogance is not always a synonym for eccentricity, nor is it necessarily a prerequisite for a great detective. However, in the etiquette-filled minefield of Victorian England, where self-congratulations would be considered an exercise in bad taste, arrogance in the demeanour of an otherwise respectable gentleman would be the height of eccentricity. Eccentricity is a necessary element for a great detective. An ordinary individual cannot move freely through all circles of society. Anyone who can (and a detective must) has to be seen to be unlike other people; the greater his skills as a detective, the greater his eccentricities. As a parodic element, eccentricities can be defined as exaggerations of certain features of behavior, and therefore as parodies, or verbal caricatures, of the great detective. At the same time that

the detective writer had to impress the reader with the plausibility of his fiction, he had to underline the ultimate impossibility of his hero. As readers, to accept a fictional great detective as real, we must be convinced of his "superhumanness," or indeed, his fictionality. A successful great detective must be a paradox of reality and illusion, a realistically articulated figment.

As shown from Poe's determination for rationality, and Collins' insistence on a plausible explanation for the sensational, detective fiction owes its inception to parody as "a lever of literary change" (Erlich 165). The formula almost immediately absorbed the device of parody, and authors used it to situate their novels self-consciously above those of their predecessors and competitors. Parody also infiltrated the persona of the great detective by molding each new character on those who had gone before, and exaggerating his abilities and foibles alike to emphasize his superhumanness.

Chapter Two:
Deadlier than the Male

In the last chapter, it was shown that many detective novels refer to the art of the detective story within their plots. This device is not used to detract from the believability of the story (as it is in postmodernist fiction); instead it is intended to bolster the realism of the detective plot in question. References to reading detective fiction help to create an internal reality for the narrative, because, as readers, we believe ourselves to be detectives on the case, and reading detective fiction has been our only training. This pronounced self-reflexive tendency can be found throughout the canon of detective fiction and is worthy of attention here because its impetus is parody. Another curious characteristic of detective fiction is the seeming attraction it holds for female writers. Ever since Anna Katharine Green published The Leavenworth Case in 1878, women have figured among the most famous and well-loved writers of the genre. As well as subscribing to standard uses of parody already discussed, women detective writers demonstrate several parodic elements that seem indigenous to the female of the species. These elements include a move toward the celebration of detective fiction demonstrated by the occasional loving parody of previous writers; and the self-conscious

inclusion of female detective writers and readers (self-parody) into the stable of characters.

In much the same way that Sherlock Holmes was shown to be a parody of Auguste Dupin, all other "great detectives" to follow may be considered parodies of Sherlock Holmes. Eccentricities abound within the personas of these fiendishly clever men. The first real difference that we note about the great detective when penned by a woman is that he is no longer the loner that Poe envisaged and the hard-boiled cynic the Americans perfected. Women often feature within the works of female detective writers, and many great detectives have their partners; Dorothy L. Sayers' Lord Peter Wimsey has Harriet, Margery Allingham gave Albert Campion Lady Amanda, and most mystery readers are waiting for P. D. James to reintroduce Cordelia Grey to Adam Dalgleish.

As well as demonstrating a greater ratio of women within the works, a detailed study of the works of female detective writers shows their female detectives becoming more and more self-reflexive. This claim can be proven by an examination of three particular female characters created by the acknowledged "Queen of Crime," Agatha Christie. Before I continue in this examination, however, a brief study of societal factors must take place in order to explain the shift occurring in the parodic nature of detective fiction.

The formula followed by female detective writers

still includes the self-conscious mention of the genre of detective fiction. This self-consciousness has evolved, however, from the denigrating tone affected by Fergus Hume, into a loving celebration of the genre. This change is linked to Cawelti's explanation of generic changes occurring in relation to societal changes. Society had changed its mind about detective fiction by the end of the First World War. Many academics admitted to enjoying the formula, and quite a few were writing them. Detective fiction had been reclaimed from Wilkie Collins' "unknown public," and was by this time the plaything of the cognoscenti. Agatha Christie, along with many of her peers, belonged to the Detection Club, which, according to Dorothy Sayers, was and "is a private association of writers of detective fiction in Great Britain, existing chiefly for the purpose of eating dinners together at suitable intervals and talking illimitable shop" (The Floating Admiral 2). Detective fiction had become legitimate, and, instead of discarding the parody which had helped to disclaim the nature of the formula, the formula merely inverted the self-consciousness to acclaim the particular narrative's membership within the genre.

With this celebratory parodic inversion in mind, let us examine three female characters created by Agatha Christie: Miss Marple, Tuppence Beresford, and Ariadne Oliver. One of Christie's most amiable and delightful characters is Miss Jane Marple, spinster lady from St.

Mary Mead. Miss Marple is an astute judge of human character, having observed village life for many years. She solves crimes by means of recontextualizing the cast of characters into situations from her sleepy little village. Scotland Yard learns not to dismiss the observations of this particular "old pussy."

Tuppence Beresford is at her most self-reflexive in the collection of short stories entitled Partners in Crime. In this collection, Christie used her characters Tommy and Tuppence to parody other fictional detectives of her time. Poirot, her first detective, was a professional and therefore could not sink to emulating others; while Miss Marple was too much the delicate amateur to indulge in mystery novels. Tommy and Tuppence Beresford, who had first appeared in Christie's second detective novel The Secret Adversary (1922), were the natural choices for the purveyors of parody. They were first introduced as a young couple who inevitably found the peace after the Great War rather tedious in comparison to the adventurous lives they had each led during the war. They were ready to be conscripted by the mysterious Mr. Carter into a double life with the secret service. In 1929, again thanks to Mr. Carter, they reappeared masquerading as Blunt's Brilliant Detectives. A detective agency is suspected as a drop for Russian spies, and Tommy and Tuppence are installed as Mr. Blunt and his secretary, Miss Robinson. As they await the Russians they solve all other cases (barring divorce) that

come their way.

Tuppence, in particular, believes herself to be eminently suitable for the job. When her husband points out that she has "no expert knowledge whatever" she self-reflexively replies, "Well, I have read every detective novel that has been published in the last ten years" (14). To liven things up, Tuppence offers a "special twenty-four hour service" (18) and Tommy decides to use a different method, as dictated by his library of great detectives, on each case.

> "These books are detective stories by the leading masters of the art. I intend to try different styles, and compare results."
> "H'm," said Tuppence. "I often wonder how these detectives would have got on in real life." (21)

The Beresfords therefore have a literary "double life" as well as a fictional one. In their imitations of famous literary detectives, they parody other fictional detectives as they solve each individual case. In her autobiography, Mrs. Christie describes the book in this way:

> Each story here was written in the manner of some particular detective of the time. Some of them by now I cannot even recognize. I remember Thornley Colton, the blind detective--Austin Freeman, of course; Freeman Wills Croft with his wonderful timetables; and inevitably Sherlock Holmes. It is interesting in a way to see who of the twelve detective story writers that I chose are still well known--some are household names, others have more or less perished in oblivion. (447)

She may not have remembered all their names, but the other writers she chose to parody include G.K. Chesterton, Henry C. Bailey, Alfred E.W. Mason, Isobel Ostrander, Valentine Williams, Baroness Orczy, Anthony Berkeley, and Edgar Wallace. She even includes a few digs at herself when Tommy implores Tuppence to make use of her "little grey cells"(51) à la Hercule Poirot.

Although Tommy and Tuppence are parodying other detectives in style, and the cases they encounter are reminiscent of standard plots by other writers, Partners in Crime still reads as a satisfying detective novel. The self-conscious use of method does not detract from the reader's ability to identify with the hero and heroine; instead it reinforces identification because Tommy and Tuppence are just like us--readers of detective fiction.

Mrs. Christie's parody does more than make the Beresfords believable characters; it reinforces the acceptance of those writers she did parody. Tommy and Tuppence rely on the methods of fictional detectives to solve the crimes they find themselves involved in. Their reliance on these methods, which work just as well for them as they worked for the detectives they cribbed them from seems to prove the authenticity and value of the methods used by their fictional mentors. Therefore, Partners in Crime bolsters, rather than shatters, the reputations of the detectives parodied. In Linda Hutcheon's words, Mrs. Christie's use of parody seems to exemplify the definition

that implies "beside" rather than "counter" and thus "suggest[s] an accord or intimacy instead of a contrast" (32) with the works parodied.

Ariadne Oliver, Christie's female detective writer, is a useful bridge between non-self-conscious mysteries and the highly self-reflexive works that were to follow in that she seems to be the prototype for the character which allows the author to be a player in her own game. Mrs. Oliver, who appears in several of the Poirot books, usually stumbles upon mysteries that baffle her, accustomed as she is to solving problems of her own devising (in, for example, Third Girl, The Pale Horse, Dead Man's Folly). She is a successful mystery writer, and she can be seen as a lighthearted self-caricature of Agatha Christie. She shares secret habits with her creator, such as eating apples in the bathtub for inspiration, and secret fears about the inability to come up with yet another plot; she is also allowed to complain about many of the duties she shares with her real-life model.

> "I'm glad it's you. . . . It might have been anybody. Some silly woman who wanted me to open a bazaar, or. . . someone wanting an interview--asking me all those embarrassing questions which are always the same every time. What made you first think of taking up writing? How many books have you written? How much money do you make? Etc, etc. I never know the answers to any of them and it makes me look such a fool." (The Pale Horse 13)

Through the persona of Mrs. Oliver, Mrs. Christie is

allowed to enter into her own game. She joins forces with Poirot, her favorite detective, and pits herself against her own clever puzzles. In addition, through Mrs. Oliver, she is allowed to give voice, with impunity, to all her personal peeves concerning her profession. It should be noted, however, that Mrs. Oliver never quite beats Poirot to the answer, although she is usually of invaluable aid. Perhaps this was Christie's way of preening--the inference is that her plots were so clever that, had she not devised them, even she would not be able to solve them. Even if she does not solve the mysteries, Mrs. Oliver's presence and aid prove that the reading and writing of mystery novels can be the means by which analytical and deductive minds are forged. The character of Mrs. Oliver acts as an advertisement for the benefits of reading detective fiction, and also as a vindication for Christie's devoting her life to writing detective fiction. It might also be suggested by Mrs. Oliver's inability to solve the mysteries that the focus of Mrs. Christie's works is in the ingenious puzzles she sets rather than the solutions to those puzzles.

Mrs. Christie developed a fine female detective in the persona of Miss Marple; in Partners in Crime she offered up a self-conscious female detective in the character of Tuppence Beresford; with the creation of Mrs. Ariadne Oliver, she went one step further and created a self-conscious female detective writer. This seems to be a

habit which various other female detective writers have found enjoyable as well; the most famous practitioner of this self-reflexive tendency is Dorothy L. Sayers.

If it can be said that Agatha Christie enjoyed the puzzle element of her mysteries, we can see that the reverse applies to Dorothy L. Sayers; she cherishes her solutions rather than her puzzles. Critics of Dorothy L. Sayers have seen Harriet Vane, the Oxford-educated mystery writer, merely as a means for Miss Sayers to make love, vicariously, to her hero, Lord Peter (Symons 100). One does not have to be terribly sympathetic to Sayers, however, to see Harriet as much more than a fictional surrogate for the author. By creating Harriet, Sayers was forced to build up the rather cardboard figure of Lord Peter into a character worthy of the full-blooded character he had fallen in love with. Harriet's profession as a mystery writer qualifies her with an analytic, puzzle-solving mind--a necessary requirement for a detective. Unlike Mrs. Oliver, Harriet usually manages to solve the mysteries she finds herself in (in, for instance, Have His Carcase, Gaudy Night, Busman's Honeymoon), all the while bemoaning the fact that real life is not a bit like tidy mystery novels. If we move back from a close-up discussion of plotting devices, we also see Harriet's presence operating as a parodic element, an element on a much higher literary plane than the use made of Ariadne Oliver.

Harriet is a mystery writer. Harriet is also a

character within a mystery novel. Many of the insights we have about Lord Peter come to us via Harriet. She is portrayed as a relatively equal partner to Lord Peter and not merely as a Watson to his Holmes. Therefore, Harriet's function within the plot is not that of the naive reader that a real reader can feel superior to when bested by the master detective. Harriet possesses a certain amount of authority within the text; while she cannot be considered the implied author of the text, she may be a parodic inversion of Wayne Booth's implied author, the "implied real author." Here is Booth's famous narrative diagram:

Real -Implied -(Narrator)-(Narratee)- Implied -Real
Author Author Reader Reader

According to Booth (The Rhetoric of Fiction), the implied author is not the real author, but the implicit voice behind the particular narrative. Seymour Chatman gives the example that the implied authors of Jonathan Wild, Joseph Andrews and Amelia are all very different, and yet the real author of all three works is Henry Fielding (148).

Harriet cannot be the implied author because she is a real character, not a disembodied voice, and neither is she the narrator, but Harriet represents the thoughts of the real author, and she also is allowed insights that the real author might make which might not be accepted by the reader from the implied author. As the "implied real author" it becomes acceptable to discover that she shares

many things in common with her creator. Miss Sayers worked on a biography of Wilkie Collins; Harriet goes to the Bodleian Library to research Sheridan LeFanu, another early mystery writer (Gaudy Night). They both love Lord Peter, although obviously not in the same way; and they both write mystery novels. Harriet, however, is not a Dante scholar, and Miss Sayers was never accused of murder. One can presume that Harriet personifies Dorothy L. Sayers the mystery writer, but not the complete Dorothy L. Sayers.

With the creation of Harriet Vane, Miss Sayers has managed to demonstrate visibly and invert (albeit, lightheartedly) Booth's diagram of the narrative process. Harriet is a fictional author, but not the fictional author, in the way that, for instance, Tristram Shandy is the fictional author.

If Miss Sayers was playing with the idea of implied author, Martha Grimes is certainly playing with the implied reader. Grimes, an American professor of English, consciously plays with detective conventions in her novels. Grimes' standard characters include Superintendent Richard Jury of Scotland Yard; Melrose Plant, a brilliant and cultured aristocrat who has forsaken his title; and Melrose's hideous Aunt Agatha, a pushy American aunt-by-marriage who insists on being in on everything. Aunt Agatha acts as a foil to the intellectual superiority of Jury and Plant. All Aunt Agatha ever seems to do is to

annoy people and eat fairy cakes. She is positive that she possesses an analytical mind and will be a great detective writer. She has never written a word, and likely never will. She is constantly misreading clues, as well as people. Aunt Agatha is identified with everything that is common and distasteful about formulaic literature. Grimes has returned to the parodic ploy of denigrating the genre as a whole to carve a niche of plausibility for one's own narrative. We, as readers, despise Aunt Agatha, and so do the sympathetic characters, Plant and Jury. The syllogism is, therefore: Aunt Agatha is crass, just like pulp literature; Jury and Plant despise this crassness, as do we; therefore--a novel which aligns itself with Jury and Plant cannot be crass pulp literature. Grimes, by making Aunt Agatha the "implied real reader" of formula detective fiction, has paid us the compliment of according us a higher station; the implied reader of her fiction looks down on Aunt Agatha's ilk.

It is imperative not to confuse Aunt Agatha with a Watson-like character; she has no understanding of the mysterious whatsoever. Grimes has aligned Aunt Agatha with those readers of mystery novels who read for the story alone: readers who refuse to engage in the game the writer has invited them to join. To Aunt Agatha, a mystery novel is a diversion from reality, with a plot that leads the reader from beginning to end. If Aunt Agatha is a negative example, then Grimes' ideal reader must engage in the

puzzle which Grimes has set.

Amanda Cross, the pseudonym of Caroline Heilbrun, another American scholar, provides the third example of this triumvirate of self-reflexive characters. While she includes no mystery writers within her plots, she goes one step better--she incorporates scholars and intellectuals, trained "readers." Her characters are brilliant; the inference is that her implied reader is likewise brilliant. Examples of her adept use of the self-conscious smoke screen can be found in one of her early novels, The James Joyce Murder:

> "Do you read mystery stories?"
> "Certainly," Kate said. "And do Double-Crostics. It's either that, I've found, or bridge, boats and skiing."
> "It is interesting," Grace said, "how unlike life those stories really are. Their whole point is that so much happens. I don't mean those Ian Fleming books. Even nice little English mysteries, of what Auden calls the body in the vicarage type, they're so full of events. We have had a murder, now, but all we do, of course, is talk about it, and walk down a road together, three odd ladies in tennis shoes, to watch the husband of the deceased milk some cows." (94-5)

Conversations like this signal to the reader that, while "real" murder might not be as eventful as "fictional" murder, a thorough grounding in mystery novels is the best training possible to solve either.

Terms like "implied real author" and "implied real reader" are necessary to explain the parodic way in which

these female detective writers and readers work to engage the reader in what amounts to a clever subterfuge. The most asked question about genre and formulaic fiction is, "Why do people keep reading it?" As Dennis Porter explains, "the most readable novel is, in fact, not only one which derives from a familiar model but also one we have previously read" (99). In other words, the object, when reading detective fiction, is not to find a new experience, but to match the novel we are reading for ingenuity, style and fun against all others we have read. This explanation may be true, but it is my belief that we respond to this playful desire only subconsciously. In order to rationalize our desire to read yet another detective novel, there must be something about the genre that allows us to deceive ourselves into believing that the next one will be different from all the rest that went before. Female mystery writers seem to understand this need and include within their plots the self-conscious and parodic features that allow this complicitous deception to occur. The inclusion of an "implied real author," an "implied real reader" and an "implied ideal reader" allows us, the real readers, to place ourselves within the context of the novel and to acknowledge subliminally our opponent (the real author) in a contest of wits.

In this chapter I have shown that parody and self-reflexivity flourish in the hands of female detective writers. Not only do we find the same forms of parody to

create the great detective that we witness in the works of male detective writers, within the works of many female detective writers we also find a strain of self-reflexiveness unequalled in the works of their male counterparts. The role of female detective transmutes into self-conscious female detective, and then into self-conscious detective writer. Once the character of the female detective writer appears, a new triad is formed: the implied real author, the implied real reader, and the implied ideal reader. The connections are so logical, and the links so strong, that it seems obvious that, through the aegis of parody, female detective writers have developed their own strain of mystery fiction.

Chapter Three:
The Hard-Boiled School

The hard-boiled detective story is a distinctively American construct. Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler laid the ground rules for this new inversion of the formula in the 1920s. There are such obvious differences between the hard-boiled novel and its British cousin, the classical detective mystery, that there is no need to dwell at length upon their varied characteristics. Instead, I shall compare them in order to determine their remaining similarities. By examining the works of Hammett, Chandler, and other significant authors in some detail, I will arrive at my own answers to several questions: what prompted the hard-boiled writers to depart from the traditional formula; whether or not their infusion of gritty realism destroys the formula; and, finally, how parody works within the subgenre known as the hard-boiled school.

The classical mystery formula, which has become particularly associated with the British, requires several essential components, the foremost being a great detective. The detective is usually noble, often eccentric, sometimes comic, frequently mysterious, but rarely fallible. He is somehow beyond society, and able to move freely among the various strata. He is occasionally joined by a slower-witted companion.

On the surface, the hard-boiled detective looks very

different from his classical forerunner. There is a seediness attached to the character of the private investigator, and he is often shown to be tired, embittered and fallible. However these different characteristics are used for exactly the same purpose as the aforementioned opposite characteristics of the great detective. The private eye is similar to the great detective in that he is beyond society, and therefore able to move between the wealthy and the ragged with ease. His attractiveness and manner enable him to explore the world of the rich and mighty who seem to be just as criminally inclined as their lower class counterparts. The greatest superficial difference between the characters of the private investigator and the great detective actually accounts for their greatest similarity.

Classical mystery stories are most often puzzle stories, in which the reader attempts to discover the truth before the detective proclaims it in the last chapter. The solution of the murder always restores peace to the land; and the people of the land are assumed to be basically good. This is the crucial difference between the classical detective story and the hard-boiled mystery. The solution, in the context of the American hard-boiled mystery, rarely brings harmony back to the land. The land is essentially bad, and the detective is left to consider whether or not his violent actions have been justified by the meager results (Gregory 22). As the Continental Op says in

Dashiell Hammett's Red Harvest:

> "This damned burg's getting to me. If I don't get away soon I'll be going blood-simple like the natives. There's been what? A dozen and a half murders since I've been here." (142)

At the conclusion of his stay in "Poisonville," the Op reports to his client, Elihu Wilson, that "you'll have your city back, all nice and clean and ready to go to the dogs again" (187). This conclusion, like the conclusions of most hard-boiled detective novels, does little to restore the peace in the land. Many elements of the puzzle are not tied up by the end of the narrative, yet it must be stressed that hard-boiled detective writers somehow feel the need to try to explain everything within their own narratives. A logical ending, while tenuous, remains part of the formula.

Glenn W. Most makes another distinction between the two traditions by pointing out that while the standard plot within British tradition "begins with the discovery of the crime," the American hard-boiled novel begins:

> . . . not with a murder, but with the client's hiring the detective in some far more minor matter: a painting has been stolen, a blackmailer must be foiled, a runaway teenager must be found. The detective begins to investigate: and only then do the murders begin. The detective relentlessly pursues his course on a path increasingly strewn with corpses until a truth is uncovered for which the original assignment represented at best a misunderstanding, at worst a ploy. (347)

In hard-boiled fiction one senses that the detective himself is culpable for starting the chain of events which occur in the novel. This is contrary to the sense one has of the great detective entering to tidy up a rather messy business. However, for all their differences, the hard-boiled and traditional detective narratives are similar in that there is a detective; he is "beyond" society; there is at least one body; and there is a murderer to be apprehended.

While there are connections between the British mysteries of the golden age and the hard-boiled mysteries from the United States, the two types are impossible to confuse. The question then becomes one of rationale: for what reason have hard-boiled detective stories drastically inverted so many aspects of the classical formula, and yet remained essentially similar? One can readily see the inversions: from an infallible great detective to a fallible private eye; from rural serenity to urban jungle; from calculated plotting to wholesale murder. It might be possible to make the argument that this was a means of finding a distinctive American voice within the formula, but one would then have to ignore the work of S.S. Van Dine and Ellery Queen, American writers who, among others, created American detective novels in the classical manner.

What seems to be the impetus for this new strain within the genre is a desire for an infusion of social realism. In "The Simple Art of Murder," Raymond Chandler

writes of the difference between the British and American sensibilities toward the genre. He uses Dashiell Hammett as his example:

> Hammett wrote at first (and almost to the end) for people with a sharp,aggressive attitude to life. They were not afraid of the seamy side of things; they lived there. Violence did not dismay them; it was right down their street. Hammett gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons, not just to provide a corpse; and with the means at hand, not hand-wrought dueling pistols, curare and tropical fish. He put these people down on paper as they were, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes. (16)

Stephen Marcus sees Hammett's urge to transform the formula as an attempt to direct the genre toward literature by instilling it with social realism. He describes the Continental Op's typical journey through a case as such:

> . . . he soon discovers. . . that the "reality" that anyone involved will swear to is, in fact, itself a construction, a fabrication, a fiction, a faked and alternate reality -- and that it has been gotten together before he ever arrived on the scene. And the Op's work is therefore to deconstruct, decompose, deplot and defictionalize that "reality" and to construct or reconstruct out of it a true fiction, that is an account of what "really" happened. (201-202)

Whereas, in classical detective fiction, the ultimate

reality is revealed in an astounding reconstruction on the part of the great detective, the hard-boiled focus is on the process of evil depicted during the detective's quest rather than the solution of the crime. As Raymond Chandler once said, "The ideal mystery was one you would read if the end was missing" (Gregory 24). It was a desire to infuse realism into the formula which motivated Hammett and Chandler to equip the classical formula to survive in the "mean streets." They may have been attempting, as F.R. Jameson claims, "to bring us up short, without warning, against the reality of death itself, stale death, reaching out to remind the living of its own moldering resting place" (148).

However, while Jameson and Marcus show that the intent of hard-boiled writers like Hammett and Chandler was to raise the form from its pulp beginnings by infusing it with social realism, not even Chandler himself attempts to define the hard-boiled detective novel as literature. Chandler goes so far as to say that:

> . . . the good novel is not at all the same kind of book as the bad novel. It is about entirely different things. But the good detective story and the bad detective story are about exactly the same things, and they are about them in very much the same way. ("The Simple Art of Murder", 4)

Furthermore, if this parodic inversion of the formula was a revolution of a stature that the Russian Formalists

describe, the classical formula would have been exploded and supplanted by hard-boiled literature. Revolutionary parody subsumes its prey and creates a void to be filled by a new form of literature. Instead of obliterating traditional detective fiction, hard-boiled detective fiction has continued to contain many of the formulaic qualities of the classical mode. Instead of destroying the genre, hard-boiled detective fiction joined the family; both formulae coexist within the superstructure of detective fiction to this day. The reason for hard-boiled fiction's becoming an offshoot, rather than a successor lies in the fact that the genre could subsume the gritty realism and turn it into another facet of the formula. The adaptability of realism to the formula does not have so much to do with the strength of the formula, as it has to do with the source of that literary realism. To prove this, we must digress slightly in order to examine briefly the larger American literary tradition.

Richard Chase, who considers the characteristic American novel to be a romance, defines and separates the two categories of "novel" and "romance" in this way:

> . . . the main difference between the novel and the romance is in the way in which they view reality. The novel renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. . . . By contrast the romance, following distantly the medieval example, feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character. . .(12-13)

He then goes on specifically to examine what he calls the "American romance":

> In American romances it will not matter much what class people come from, and where the novelist would arouse our interest in a character by exploring his origin, the romancer will probably do so by enveloping it in mystery. Character itself becomes, then, somewhat abstract and ideal, so much so in some romances that it seems to be merely a function of plot. The plot we may expect to be highly colored. Astonishing events may occur, and these are likely to have a symbolic or ideological, rather than a realistic, plausibility. Being less committed to the immediate rendition of reality than the novel, the romance will more freely veer toward mythic, allegorical, and symbolistic forms. (13)

Chase could be describing the hard-boiled detective novel when he speaks of the American romance. The romance tradition can be found when Hammett's Sam Spade sets out to avenge the death of his partner in The Maltese Falcon. While Archer wasn't a particularly good partner, and Spade was cuckolding him, the moral code demands that a hero do what a hero must do.

Chase's argument becomes even more revealing for our purposes when he examines the character of Natty Bumppo from Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales. He comments on D.H. Lawrence's description of Natty, and determines that, "The equivocal word in Lawrence's description of Natty Bumppo is 'killer.'" He points out the difference

between a villain and a romantic hero by saying that, "Natty kills only out of necessity; and he kills, as it were, lovingly. His code does not allow him to plunder, exploit, or kill in hate" (62). It is this kind of loving killer we witness in hard-boiled detective fiction. Corrupt police might beat him to pulp before Marlowe would fink on a friend in The Long Goodbye; Ned Beaumont tries everyway he can to protect his friend and boss Paul Madvig, in The Glass Key, even after Madvig has turned on him. Private eyes live by this code which Natty Bumppo set in motion, and they can recognize like values in other people -- sometimes, disconcertingly, in the murderer. In The Lady in the Lake, Marlowe and Patton (a straight cop) watch a murderer slip out of their hands:

> "He's crossing the dam," I said. "Has Andy got a gun?"
>
> "I don't figure he'd use one if he had," Patton said calmly. "He don't know any reason why he should."
>
> "Well, I'll be damned," I said.
>
> Patton sighed. "He hadn't ought to have given me a break like that," he said. "Had me cold. I got to give it back to him. Kind of puny too. Won't do him a lot of good."
>
> "He's a killer," I said.
>
> "He ain't that kind of killer," Patton said.
>
> * * *
>
> "Guy didn't stop for the sentry," the sergeant said, . . . "Orders are to shoot in a case like that," he said. "The sentry shot." He pointed to the grooves in the shoulder at the edge of the drop. "This is where he went off."
>
> A hundred feet down in the canyon a small coupe was smashed against the side of a huge granite boulder.

> It was almost upside down, leaning a little. There were three men down there. They had moved the car enough to lift something out.
>
> Something that had been a man. (215-217)

The bitterness that Philip Marlowe shows for all the wasted lives he encounters is more than a mere "obbligato" line running above the harmonies of the narrative. This bitterness is the theme which underlies all hard-boiled detective novels. It is as if the romantic melody of American fiction has been transposed into a minor key. The private eye is not only the wayward son of the great detective; he is also the disillusioned grandson of Natty Bumppo and Huck Finn.

Richard Chase sees Cooper's Leatherstocking Tales as the first proof of Tocqueville's "idea that although the abstractness and generality of the democratic imagination would make unavailable some of the traditional sources of fiction, this abstractness would in itself be a new source of mythic ideality" (15). Deerslayer was the archetypal American hero, and the hard-boiled writers molded part of their self-sufficient loner heroes on Cooper's brave new man. However, as Philip Durham and George Grella point out, there is something of the chivalric hero in the private eye as well. Marlowe was acknowledged by Chandler as an anagram of Mallory, and other names and titles in the Chandler canon point back to the Arthurian legends: Helen Grayle, Orfamay Quest, The Lady in the Lake. Grella

sees chivalric romance as the blueprint for the hero, "narrative structure and moral judgement" of the hard-boiled novel (113). As he says, of Chandler's The Big Sleep:

> Marlowe, "the shop-soiled Galahad" (The High Window, ch..xxviii), does in fact become the knight of the novel. Hired by the incredibly old, incredibly feeble General Sternwood, an impotent Fisher King, to save his daughter from the Gorgon of blackmail, Marlowe finds the beautiful, depraved girl naked, and saves her, only to discover she is a murderess, the Loathly Lady instead of the fair damsel, the Dark Sister of romance. The detective realizes "It wasn't a game for knights" (The Big Sleep, ch.xxiv). His quest is ironic since the hidden truth he discovers is a source of further evil. (114)

The character of the private eye, by becoming an ironic inversion of the knight who is pure and brave, is seen to be a parody of both the Arthurian tradition and the romantic assumption that evil can be vanquished. The hard-boiled hero shares many characteristics with both the knights of old and his early American predecessors. Perhaps Raymond Chandler came up with the best description, to date, of the hard-boiled hero when he said:

> . . . down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero, he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honour, by instinct, by inevitability, without thought of it, and cer-

> tainly without saying it. He must be the best man in his world and a good enough man for any world. ("The Simple Art of Murder", 333)

The private eye, then, is both the heroic loner and the modern knight errant searching for the elusive grail of truth and justice. However, unlike the earlier possibilities as penned by Twain and Cooper, the American hero can no longer "light out for the territories." There is no more frontier. It is no accident that the novels of Hammett, Chandler and Ross Macdonald all take place in the state of California, the furthermost western state in the Union. The frontier has been subdivided; the idyllic holy wood has become the corrupt Hollywood, and the City of Angels is run by the underworld (Grella, 116).

It is because of this inherited baggage of the romantic tradition that the hard-boiled detective novel cannot break the patterns of the classical detective formula by infusing them with realism. Instead of social realism, the combination of detective puzzle and romantic quest comes closer to allegory. Because the realism inserted cannot undermine the formula, the formula instead absorbs the insertion of social realism. Realism, instead of subverting the formula (which Jameson implied was Chandler's intention), becomes part of the requirements of hard-boiled detective fiction: a new element of social consciousness must be inserted into the tradition, in the same way that the creation of a new great detective re-

quires some form of inversion on the models already in existence.

It is thus possible to see new and different insertions of social realism into the standard hard-boiled theme, not as revolutionary attacks on the old structure, but as necessary elements of the old structure. In this way, one must read each new inversion as a capitulation to the formula, not a siege against the tradition. Three of the most innovative inversions on the hard-boiled theme are by Sue Grafton, Ted Wood and Howard Engel. By examining each specific inversion that these writers employ, I can determine to what extent each author succeeds in creating a new niche within the tradition by complying with the need for an inclusion of a particular social statement.

Sue Grafton's novels (A is for Alibi and B is for Burglar) are set in California and involve a first-person narrative by a private investigator. In these choices, she has set herself up as following the Hammett/Chandler tradition. Grafton's principle addition to the pattern is that her private eye, Kinsey Milhone, is a woman. Milhone's sex helps to point out various elements of the genre. She shares many characteristics with her male predecessors: she is a loner, twice-divorced, was with the police force, has killed, believes in people, and is often disappointed in them. The continuation of these traits emphasizes the fact that these traits themselves (those of

the knight errant) are somehow necessary to the make-up of the private investigator.

Grafton includes other standard elements of traditional detective fare in her novels; in particular she pays homage to the puzzle element of the classical formula. By making her detective's landlord a creator of crossword puzzles, she not only pays lipservice to the puzzle element of the genre, but also artfully includes a tribute to other self-conscious writers:

> "I know the guy who writes those puzzles," I said. "He's my landlord."
>
> His eyebrows shot up. "This guy lives in town here? He's a whiz! He drives me up the wall with these things. Look at this one. Eighteenth-Century Novelists and he includes all their books and their characters and everything. I had to go read Henry Fielding and Laurence Sterne and people I never even heard about just to get through the thing." (B is for Burglar, p.125)

By mentioning Sterne and Fielding within her narrative, Grafton is, by implication, attempting to legitimize her own work.

Although Grafton extends the scope of hard-boiled detective fiction by making her private eye female, she has not deviated from the pattern of the American formula. It might seem, to the ordered mind, that an inversion of a formula that is already an inversion of another formula would take us back to the original plan, but this is not the case. In order for an inversion to work effectively,

it cannot completely destroy the structure which it inverts. In other words, only one or two pieces of the pattern can be changed within any one inversion. Therefore, Sue Grafton's female private eye does not create a new subgenre; Kinsey Milhone is, in effect, merely the element of social realism which the formula requires.

In the same manner as Grafton, Ted Wood shifts his hard-boiled hero from the "mean streets" to a pastoral setting, thereby not creating a new tradition so much as maintaining the inherited mandate of social realism. In the novels Dead in the Water, Murder on Ice, and Live Bait, Ted Wood's detective hero is once again a man, but he has been transplanted from the "mean streets" to a rural village. Reid Bennett, an ex-Marine, ex-Metro Toronto policeman, is Chief of Police in Murphy's Harbour, a sleepy village which doubles its population in the summer months. By changing the traditional locale, and superimposing urban violence onto a rural setting, Wood explores and deflates the common myth that evil exists on a diet of concrete and glass.

Chief Bennett is still a loner, and the plots in which he exists contain the familiar thread of one-man-against-the-world common to the hard-boiled school. By placing evil in the garden, however, Ted Wood has taken the hard-boiled detective novel one step further along its bleak path. He has withdrawn the chance of asylum in the same way that Hammett and Chandler relieved their readers

of a frontier by placing their tales of corruptions as far west as they possibly could. Wood has extended, rather than completely inverted the formula of the hard-boiled detective. He has replaced the concept of the urban jungle with that of the universal jungle. --

Howard Engel may someday be known as the father of the "soft-boiled detective novel." His hero, Benny Cooperman, operates in Grantham, Ontario. Benny grew up Jewish in a small town; with these two character features, Engel has effectively hamstrung him as a shadow of any kind. Wherever he goes, people either know him by name, reputation, or family connection. Half the town went to school with him; the other half watched him grow up. Benny is also blessed with an atypical Jewish mother; she has no time for him, doesn't really care what he does, and limits him to one home-cooked meal a week.

Engel does not focus on Jewishness merely for the joke it will create. Instead, he is inverting the role of the detective to its most logical extreme. While the private eye must be self-sufficient to succeed, Benny is grounded in a community. This inversion does not mean, however, that the detective is no longer a loner; instead, it comments on the concept of community. Benny does solve crimes. Being a competent private eye places Benny in the tradition of loners who find their roots in Poe's Chevalier Dupin. Technically, Benny does work alone and live alone, but his separation from the community is not

complete. He still tries to eat kosher, and is continually having to report the comings and goings of his family to the people he attempts to interview. The inference that we are alone, even when residing in a tightly-knit community, is the infusion of realism that Engel seems to be highlighting.

Engel plays with many of the same parodic conventions witnessed in previous works. Benny belittles the fictional efforts of literary detectives in order to authenticate his own actions:

> "Good morning." I returned the greeting and tried to find evidence of Pete's state of mind in his face. He looked like he hadn't been up all night. He hadn't cut himself shaving, and his breakfast wasn't drying on his tie. I asked him what was on his mind. I always did that when the Holmesian stuff didn't pay off. (A City Called July, 82)

Engel also plays with the convention of the implied author in a novel way. In his latest book, A City Called July, Benny discusses various odd but lovable characters who are part of the local colour of Grantham. Among them is someone he refers to as "The Mad Scribbler":

> "He hasn't been around for awhile."
> "What are you talking about? He eats in the United at least three times a week."
> "Still at his great work?"
> "Sure," I said, "he must have covered a ton of paper by this time. And you know how he writes: on the lines, between the lines, down the page, diagonally, and always in a

great frenzy." (85)

In 1986, Engel's first Benny Cooperman novel, The Suicide Murders, was filmed for television. The Mad Scribbler was indeed part of the scenery, and was played by Engel himself. What might have seemed local colour to the uninitiated watching the television show was actually an intertextual (intermedia?) link commenting on truth and fiction. While we, as readers/viewers, know that Engel wrote the Benny Cooperman novels, which are fictions, Engel playing the Mad Scribbler adds a dimension of reality to Benny. Engel enters the same plane of reality as Benny, and, because we know that Engel is real, Benny becomes more palpable as a result of his connection to Engel. Benny becomes more than a first-person fiction; he is actually a construct of the Mad Scribbler who sits in the United Cigar Store and furiously monitors Benny's every move. By entering the fiction as the Mad Scribbler, Engel adds his own reality to the world of the fiction. As well as infusing an element of social realism into the hard-boiled tradition by creating a loner within a community, Engel has added another element of realism by building into the novels the construct of an eyewitness.

As we have seen, the inversions which occur in hard-boiled detective fiction, whether they pertain to feminism, the loss of asylum, or the incorporation of the detective into the community, are all absorbed within the structure which is the hard-boiled detective novel. The

infusion of reality which Hammett and Chandler attempted to instill into the genre became, almost immediately, part of the formula. This was possible for two main reasons: the American literary tradition was so thoroughly set in the mode of the romance that the American version of realism created a form of allegory rather than authenticity; and the formula, based as it is on self-conscious and parodistic elements was stronger than the elements of realism introduced to it. In a sense, while Hammett and Chandler attempted to create a new form by mixing realism into the format of the detective novel, they instead managed to innoculate the formula against the disease of literature. Hard-boiled detective fiction is responsible for the conscription of social realism into the genre.

Chapter Four:
The Anti-Detectives

In the previous chapters, I examined elements of parody that can be found within the genre of detective fiction. In the last chapter in particular, I examined how parodic inversions work to create new sub-genres within the formula. In this chapter, I shall do some inversions of my own, and examine how the genre of detective fiction itself is used as a parodic element by postmodernist writers.

Linda Hutcheon, when discussing the postmodernist rationale for internalizing the structures of detective fiction, cites the three main elements of detective fiction which appeal to the postmodernist sensibilities as "the self-consciousness of the form itself, its strong conventions, and the important textual function of the hermeneutic act of reading" (Narcissistic Narrative, 71). We have already seen how detective writers refer to fiction, and particularly detective fiction, within their texts to instill a sense of verisimilitude in their own work. The strong conventions of the genre are what Dennis Porter uses to claim that the detective novel can be seen as a paradigm of Barthes' "readable text" (83). The reader is able to refamiliarize the mysterious and the puzzling because "the reader of a detective novel. . . carries in

his head the model of which the work in hand is an example" (91). Because the classical puzzle mysteries essentially invite the reader to participate in the solving of the mystery before the detective can, the reader shares the role of detective in the same way that the detective can be seen as the most gifted of "readers."

Hutcheon sees the postmodernists' use of detective patterns as a "defamiliarizing" technique, a tool to point out the chaos and illogicality that is real life. While Hutcheon is clear and concise in her determination of why postmodernist writers delight in inverting detective patterns in their novels, she is concerned only with the effects that are wrought on postmodernist works. I have been examining how parody works within the context of detective fiction, however, and therefore the focus of this chapter will be to discover whether or not the postmodernist "anti-detective" novel is an exploitation of the formula, or an innovative new plateau of the genre itself.

In The Doomed Detective (1984), Stefano Tani argues that the anti-detective novel is an exploitation of the detective novel. He explains how inverted detective fiction is used by the postmodernists:

> The detective novel, a reassuringly "low" genre that is supposed to please the reader, thus becomes the ideal medium of postmodernism in its inverted form, the anti-detective novel, which frustrates the expectations of the reader, transforms a mass-media genre into a sophisti-

> cated expression of avant-garde sensibility, and substitutes for the detective as central and ordering character the decentering and chaotic admission of mystery, of non-solution. (40)

Through Tani's exploration of various anti-detective texts which he has labelled innovative, deconstructive and metafictional, he determines that today, "a contemporary literary detective novel is almost necessarily an anti-detective novel, especially if its author is aware of his place in the postmodern trend" (74). He sees anti-detective fiction as an inversion of Poe's original efforts to codify the ~~irrati~~onal (150).

Tani vacillates when it comes to determining the question of innovation as opposed to exploitation. In one sense, he determines that the postmodernists have exploited the genre, and thus effectively killed it, when he calls on the inversion arguments of Tynjanov (36) to explain the evolution of anti-detective fiction; on the other hand, he attempts to see it as a separate genre:

> . . . since the detective story as a genre has evolved into a tightly structured system of rules obeyed by professional writers exclusively devoted to detective fiction, it seems most reasonable to view the anti-detective novel not as a continuation of the genre but as a transgression of it, or as a mutation. A new use of old techniques can lead not only to a renewal of a genre but also to the constitution of another genre, or, as I think the case is here, to a phenomenon that still maintains visible connections

> with the detective novel (the literary and intellectual anti-detective novel is mainly in the stream of the rational Poesque and British tradition even though it offers no solution) but has a basically new meaning. (40-41)

Michael Holquist, in his influential article "Whodunit and Other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Postwar Fiction," maintains that "what the structural and philosophical presuppositions of myth and depth psychology were to modernism (Mann, Joyce, Woolf, and so forth), the detective story is to postmodernism (Robbe-Grillet, Borges, Nabokov, and so on)" (150). His argument is that an integration of kitsch and serious art can be seen as equal to the modernists' desire to reintegrate myth into twentieth-century sensibilities. He describes detective fiction as an escape from literature itself, and that is the glamour which it holds for postmodernists wishing to undermine the complacency with which literature has come to be viewed. It is not imperative to our argument to agree or disagree with Holquist's determination of the genre as kitsch; Holquist's interpretation is useful in that it proposes a reasonable answer to the question of how postmodernists view detective fiction and their subsequent uses of the genre.

> In art there is always the potential for reduction to kitsch, especially in an age in which we possess the technology to print the Mona Lisa on bath towels. That is unfortunate, but not the cause for alarm it is so often felt to be. If we really be-

> lieve in culture, we should have faith in its capacity to survive even such indignities. And one of the ways that art does survive is by going on the counterattack, exploiting kitsch for new effects of which kitsch in its complacency, its urge to reassure, was itself unaware. That is the lesson of the metaphysical detective story in our own time. (173)

From their arguments we can deduce that both Holquist and Tani see postmodernist anti-detective novels exploiting classical detective fiction, but whereas Tani sees this exploitation as the ultimate death of detective fiction, Holquist is willing to allow detective fiction to continue in the realm of kitsch which he believes it never rose above. To determine my own position, it will be helpful to examine two acknowledged postmodernist works which use detective fiction for their own particular purposes: Umberto Eco's The Name of the Rose, and Tom Berger's Who is Teddy Villanova? Each work exploits the genre in a different way: Eco follows the classical golden age formula, and Berger gambols in the realm of the hard-boiled novel. Because of their approaches to the two main currents of the genre, these two novels serve as the paradigm of the postmodernists' effects on the detective genre.

Umberto Eco's novel The Name of the Rose has all the earmarks of a postmodernist novel: intertextuality, self-aware concentration on the bookishness of the world it creates, encyclopaedical lists, emphasis on the chaos and

illogicality of the world without, a chinese box structure of narrators, subversion of suspense, and a concentration on abstract philosophical issues and semiotic structures. It also uses and attempts to subvert the conventions of the detective novel, a favorite postmodernist activity as we have been informed.

In "Reflections on The Name of the Rose" Umberto Eco insists that the idea for the novel came about because he "felt like poisoning a monk" (9). Later in the same article, he describes his rationale for the "detective metaphysic" employed in his novel:

> I believe people like thrillers not because there are corpses or because there is a final celebratory triumph of order (intellectual, social, legal and moral) over the disorder of evil. The fact is that the crime novel represents a kind of conjecture, pure and simple. (14)

It would seem from his explanation that Eco chose the genre of detective fiction because of its inherent popularity. It is strange, then, that Eco and many other critics and sophisticated readers were surprised when The Name of the Rose became a bestseller. Postmodernists have become acclimatized to, if they do not actually cherish, the realization that the general reading public will not herald the avant-garde. Eco, in the subsequent above-mentioned article, hypothesizes several reasons why the "ingenuous reader" was so taken with the book. The narrator was young and naive (12), the detective metaphysic de-

ceives the reader until the end of the text (14), and "the ingenuous reader entered into direct contact, beyond any mediation of content, with the fact that it is impossible for there to be a story" (15). What Eco does not seem to take into consideration, when trying to explain his vast and varied audience, is that many of the conventions which he considers defamiliarizing and metafictional act quite contrarily when used in tandem with the detective metaphysic, as he calls it. We have seen in previous chapters that detective fiction is a genre of self-awareness, but that the self-awareness of detective fiction does not jolt the reader from his complacency so much as involve him in a time-honoured conspiracy to accept the given text as divorced from and superior to the encompassing formula. Eco was not fooling ingenuous readers into imagining a formula; he was unintentionally signalling to the ingenious, trained detective reader a familiar message to suspend disbelief in the selfsame formula.

Just as Plant, Campion, Poirot, Wimsey, Cuff and Holmes assimilate and send up their predecessors, William of Baskerville is created in the acceptable manner of the great detective: a little of all the rest, and an additional eccentricity or two. Adso describes his lifestyle with William as an irregular one: "even at the abbey we remained up at night and collapsed wearily during the day" (9). This description is evocative of Auguste Dupin, Poe's detective who never went out in daylight hours. When

William is first described, there are remarkable resonances of the first description Watson gives of Sherlock Holmes:

> Brother William's physical appearance was at that time such as to attract the attention of the most inattentive observer. His height surpassed that of a normal man and he was so thin that he seemed still taller. His eyes were sharp and penetrating; his thin and slightly beaky nose gave his countenance the expression of a man on the lookout, save in certain moments of sluggishness. . . (The Name of the Rose 8)

> His very person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer. In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing, save during those interval of torpor to which I have alluded; and his thin hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. (A Study in Scarlet 20)

William proves himself even more Holmesian when he speaks to the cellarer who is searching for the abbot's horse, Brunellus. William informs him of the horse's whereabouts (and even refers to the horse by name), although he admits he has never seen the horse. It is no accident that one is made to think of Holmes' famous introductory line to Watson, "'You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive'" (18). Allusions are found to the predilections of both Collins' Sergeant Cuff (roses) and Christie's Hercule

Poirot (vegetable marrows), when Adso informs us that William "would spend the whole day walking in the vegetable garden"(10).

As we have already seen, this patchwork method of creating a great detective is not a postmodernistic novelty to the informed detective reader, but a conventional method of simultaneously conforming to and breaking out of the formulaic mold. Likewise, the detective reader who has grown accustomed to Lord Peter Wimsey's continual quotations and Philo Vance's dilletantish knowledge will not be thrown off balance by discussions of private language (120), semiotics (48), or histories of medicinal herbs (72).

Furthermore, Eco is not the innovator he claims to be when he states that his novel "continues to deceive the ingenuous reader until the end, so the ingenuous reader may not even realize that this is a mystery in which very little is discovered and the detective is defeated." We need only look at E.C. Bentley's famous Trent's Last Case (1913) to see that while Eco has given us a detective who discovers the right answer for all the wrong reasons, we have already weathered a detective who persuades us of the wrong answer for all the right reasons.

> "Where is all my wisdom, then? I behaved stubbornly, pursuing a semblance of order, when I should have known well that there is no order in the universe."
>
> * * *
>
> "You have no reason to reproach yourself: you did your best."

> "A human best, which is very little. It's hard to accept the idea that there cannot be an order in the universe. . . "(The Name of the Rose 599-600)

> "I am cured. I will never touch a crime-mystery again. The Manderson affair shall be Philip Trent's last case. His high-blown pride at last breaks under him." Trent's smile suddenly returned. "I could have borne everything but that last revelation of the impotence of human reason." (Trent's Last Case 237-238)

Stefano Tani is justified in labelling The Name of the Rose an anti-detective novel insofar as Eco's text has definite postmodernist leanings and does employ a detective metaphysic. What is not justifiable is Tani's claim that postmodernist anti-detective novels are strongest when inverting the classical ratiocinative patterns of the genre. Instead, with the metafictional purposes of postmodernism deflated by the longstanding conventions of self-reflection in the detective novel, the root stock of the genre seems to be stronger than the newly grafted anti-detective sapling. The Name of the Rose could be called a successful contemporary detective novel written in the classical tradition.

We have seen that the classical tradition of detective fiction is strong enough to subsume postmodernistic intentions. By examining Tom Berger's Who is Teddy Villanova?, a postmodernist inversion of the hard-boiled novel, we shall see if this holds true for sub-genres of detec-

tive fiction as well. The hard-boiled school of detective fiction, although more recent than the classical tradition, is now an equally well-established formula. It differs from the classical tradition mainly in its desire to infuse the formula with social realism. In the last chapter I showed that the attempted realism of the hard-boiled school became subsumed into formulaic allegory. While hard-boiled detective fiction privileges realism, it ultimately does not deliver realism. It is, however, this impetus to privilege realism that makes it the perfect target for the "anti-detectives." Since the postmodernist wish is to "defamiliarize" (Hutcheon, Narcissistic Narrative 72), this wish may be granted within a formula which privileges the familiar.

Tani has stated that the postmodernists' rationale for subverting the detective formula is to highlight the illogicality of our contemporary world (149). Instead of a familiar structure in which the strange becomes explained, the anti-detective novel shows how the strange becomes stranger. Tom Berger's novel, Who is Teddy Villanova? plays with the known and the unknown by attacking the very conventions of how we know things: by their names. This means of attack is not particularly new to postmodernist thought: in his influential essay S/Z, Roland Barthes posits that "what is obsolescent in today's novel is not the novelistic, it is the character; what can no longer be written is the Proper Name" (95). The proper name is

however, important to hard-boiled detective fiction as Dennis Porter explains in his discussion of Dashiell Hammett:

> The problem of naming is, in effect, also raised by implication in Hammett's paragraph [the opening paragraph of The Maltese Falcon], but it is raised in order to be dismissed. The inference to be drawn from such a description is that there is a simple, direct equivalence between words and the things they denote. Sam Spade is named by his author by means of words that themselves have the honesty of concrete things, and Spade will himself be used as an instrument of further honest naming. The stylistic message of such a passage is the recognizably American one that the world may be disclosed through the word, if the word divests itself of conventional literary associations and makes itself plain again in order to record no more than the senses perceive. (165-166)

Names are important to Chandler as well, as seen in the previous chapter. Although the names are distortions, (anagrams like Marlowe, homonyms like Grayle), they are, in a specific way, to be trusted. The hard-boiled tradition has created the allegorical signpost of the proper name to designate the character; the postmodern anti-detective explodes that convention.

Berger's novel begins with the line, "Call me Russell Wren." This sentence does three things simultaneously for the reader: it situates the novel in the tradition of American fiction by pointing out the antecedents the text is willing to allow itself; it points to the parodic

nature of the work; and it calls into question the reliability and infallibility of proper names. Is this narrator really Russell Wren, or Russell Wren only for this narrative? As the narrative progresses, the naming process becomes the focus of the text. Russell is told by Bakewell (a fat man, in the tradition of Collins' Count Fosco and Hammett's Casper Gutman, for whom Russell affects a Peter Lorre lisp) to give a message to Teddy Villanova. Trying to determine who this Villanova might be, Russell notices that an E. Newhouse is listed on the office directory board. Having played with the etymology of "Villanova," Russell is sure he has found his man. The listing disappears, however, and Russell is soon accused of being Villanova himself.

> I hung my head. My voice was sheepish as well. "You won't believe this, either, but my name isn't Teddy Villanova."
>
> He smirked significantly at his confreres and shrugged. Then to me: "If you say so. Maybe you'd like to tell us what your name is?"
>
> "Russell Wren."
>
> "Mind if I look at them other cards you got there?"
>
> I handed them over. He began to read aloud the designation on each, and on all it was Villanova. (76-77)

Bakewell, the fat man, is killed, and his body disappears and reappears with metronomic regularity. Russell's weapon, a .25 caliber Browning automatic, might be the murder weapon. The bullet from a Browning automatic is found in a brownie bought from the "Homemade Bakery." Russell eats

the brownie at an open house at Ganymede Press, which is not (as he believes) a publishing house specializing in pedophilia, but a company owned by a man named Press which produces pressure cookers.

> "Ganymede's his first name?"
> She rolled her eyes behind the lenses. "Ganymede's another thing. It's the pressure cooker, you know. . . . many years ago"--she assumed a maudlin purse of mouth-- "the teeny little daughter of the president of the pressure cooker makers, sitting in her high chair at mealtimes, banging her tiny little spoon, would try to say, 'Give me meat!' But what it sounded like, you see, was, 'Ganymede!'" (64)

Oddly, it seems that Russell is the only person ever to have made this mistake. Names and words continue to be important; later in the narrative policemen named Zwingli, Calvin and Knox handcuff Russell on the grounds that his library is too snobbish. Reality is continually called into question as well. The Protestant namessakes might be policemen, or they might be actors in a movie entitled "The Reformers."

Russell tries to discover the truth among the various illusions he is subjected to. His detecting tools are those of the deductively trained reader:

> "Obviously the man is a charlatan. He has all the earmarks: arch idiom; strained and impertinent references to the higher culture; a pose as being, at once, all the kinds of degenerate I confessed to you, just now through the door, that I am not -" (246)

It is obvious from his predilection to give credence to the relevance of names that he will also rely on literary skills to aid him in his solving of the puzzle. The explanation for this reliance on literary allusions and comparisons is that Russell has an M.A. and taught English literature before becoming a private eye. This is not an uncommon thread in detective fiction; writers as disparate as Amanda Cross, Martha Grimes, Umberto Eco, and even the hard-boiled Sue Grafton have stressed the importance of literary analysis in the solving of mysteries. Russell differs from his predecessors only in the fact that he fails to deduct the right answer. Berger deflates the formula at the same time as he uses it. In Russell's conversation with his landlord he explains what is ostensibly Russell's opinions of the police force, but what might be seen as Berger's opinions of literature:

> I should ask you to call the police, but they have proved inept, if not impotent, in their previous efforts. . . Like all contemporary art-forms, theirs is in its decadence, occupied solely with structure and not substance, more ritualistic role-playing. (229)

The postmodernistic sensibilities of this work succeed in exploding and exploiting the genre they subvert. Realism, the hard-boiled addition to the formula, is twisted to show that rational explanations will not succeed in an irrational contemporary world. Furthermore, it is shown that only Russell, handicapped as he is by a mind which

wants to make sense out of the situation, is ill-equipped for the world in which he finds himself. Who is Teddy Villanova? succeeds as an "anti-detective" novel because Berger has chosen the proper formula to parody: the American hard-boiled detective novel.[10]

Jorge Luis Borges also recognizes the need to use the hard-boiled structure as is seen in his description of Lönnrot in "Death and the Compass":

> Lönnrot believed himself a pure reasoner, an Auguste Dupin, but there was something of the adventurer in him, and even a little of the gambler. (Labyrinths, 76)

Thomas Pynchon sets his The Crying of Lot 49 (which Tani labels a "deconstructive anti-detective novel") in California, the birthplace of the hard-boiled strain; and Robbe-Grillet's The Erasers plays more with the seamy, gritty elements of the genre than the ratiocinative urge. A case could be made, furthermore, that Robbe-Grillet was attempting a bilingual Nabokovian pun with the title, Les Gommes, which, while literally serving a figurative purpose to the narrative (erasers as erasers, erasers as killers), may also be seen as an allusive reminder of the nickname for the American private eye--the gumshoe.

Stefano Tani is adamant in his belief that the anti-detective novel takes its point of departure with the formula from the Poesque tradition. However, even as he denies the hard-boiled school access to the process, he makes some very revealing comments, such as: "In the hard-

boiled school, detection could become a personal existential quest, but not to the point of being unfulfilled (as it is in The Crying of Lot 49) or fulfilled in a thoroughly unconventional way ("La muerte y la brujula," Les Gommes)"(42). What Tani fails to acknowledge is that it is precisely this distance from the classical formula that makes the hard-boiled school the most positive and productive form of the genre to parody.

Postmodernist anti-detective novels put forth the theory that there is no solution. The hard-boiled school attempts a solution, but it is nothing when compared to the classical formula which demands not only a solution but a "resolution." The private eye is more realistic than the great detective, in that he is potentially fallible; it is therefore more rewarding to explode the myth of the realistic by denying closure than it is to toy with an already stylized formula. Eco fails to astonish his readers because he attempts to denote fallibility in a Great Detective. This is not subversion of the formula; this is exactly the method chosen by the hard-boiled writers to create their own brand of detective fiction. By concentrating on making a great detective fallible, Eco is one step short of subversion, and his novel ends up subsumed by the formula. It is for precisely this reason that Berger, Pynchon, Borges and Robbe-Grillet succeed in their attempts to subvert the formulaic to their own purposes; they have chosen the ideal detective/reader as

their hero--the private investigator. Whereas the reader will accept anything within the confines of the classical model, he becomes defamiliarized quickly and effectively when "the best man for his world" is used as the dupe. In order to play with and subvert realism, one must begin with a model which cherishes the notion of reality.

The Russian Formalists saw parody as the battleground of revolution. Perhaps this is the test we can use to determine the validity of Tani's argument. If successful, parody of each strain of detective fiction should, by necessity, explode the genre to the extent that no innovation can continue within the genre.

This statement is upheld when examining hard-boiled detective fiction. As we have demonstrated in the previous chapter, for all the inversions which occur, no innovation is occuring: inversions such as sex, race, and locale are repetitions along the lines of infusing social commitment into the genre. Berger, Pynchon, Borges, Robbe-Grillet, and those who follow in their wake have effectively subsumed and supplanted the hard-boiled school of detective fiction.

The same cannot be said of the classical tradition. The labyrinths, maps and classical allusions which were used in the attempt to subvert the genre have been incorporated into the genre itself. One need look only as far as the works of Martha Grimes to discover that semiology, mazes, doubles, Ariadnes and cloistered abbeys have found

an undisruptive place in the classical formula. In Jerusalem Inn (1984) for example, an Anglican priest discusses semiotics with Superintendent Richard Jury, Grimes' Scotland Yard based detective.

> "Semiology is more or less the study of signs.". . . He held up his drawing, nothing more than a square, with crossbars like a large X joining the corners. "The semiotic square. We live by contraries, don't we? Life, death. Thought, non-thought. We think by contraries." To each corner he added a letter, the same letter--M. "I'd say you, of all people, might be able to appreciate the notion. Again, that small purse of a smile, that cut-glass gaze. "One might finally arrive at some paradigmatic model which would be universal enough to take in all possibilities." Father Rourke tore off the back cover of the periodical, handed it to Jury. "A structure that might simplify thought."
>
> Jury laughed, folded the thick paper in quarters, and put it in his back pocket. "Father Rourke, you're doing anything but simplifying my thoughts. And what's the M stand for?"
>
> The priest looked amused. "Really, Superintendent. Mystery, of course. Fill it in. It's but an interpretation of signs." (p.23-4)

In The Deer Leap (1985), Jury finds himself embroiled in a mystery which contains both mazes and mise en abyme mixed into a plot of mistaken identities which is highly reminiscent of Wilkie Collins.

> On the walls left and right, two identical trompe l'oeil murals. They seemed to be a reflection not only of each other, but of the real scene between them -- on either side of a

> marble fireplace, french doors led to separate stone paths that in turn led to the wide gardens beyond. Jury blinked. It was worse than seeing double. (104-5)
>
> * * *
>
> They were walking between the privet hedges that made up the maze, another of the Baron's practical jokes, she told him. "It's very carefully constructed," said Gillian Kendall. . . . "It's quite intricate," she went on. "For one thing, it's round. It can't help but give the impression a person is going in circles."
>
> "Metaphorically speaking, a person usually is." (113)

Grimes, while thoroughly rooted in the classical tradition, assimilates many postmodernist motifs into her detective novels. These elements enhance, rather than distract from the classical puzzle mystery because the root of both impulses are the same: the reader has been invited to share in an intricate game with the author.

It is possible to agree and disagree with Tani's pronouncements on detective fiction. The anti-detective novel does exploit detective fiction for its own ends. The anti-detective novel is the new detective novel, but only if one is following the hard-boiled strand. Superficially, the anti-detective novel can be seen to be parodying the ratiocinative classical tradition, but only insofar as the hard-boiled detective novel parodies the classical tradition. However, the chaotic, illogical reality of the anti-detective novel cannot be seen to supplant the order

of the traditional detective novel, because the first premise accepted by any reader of the genre is that reality of any kind has no place in classical detective fiction. Therefore, while postmodernists may have successfully subsumed the hard-boiled school of detective fiction, they have also strengthened the genre by adding yet another wrinkle to the exceedingly popular classical formula.

Conclusion

In the Introduction, I quoted Geoffrey H. Hartman denigrating detective fiction on the grounds that its stylization and formalism contributed to a sense of unreality within the genre. While I agree that detective fiction is formalistic and often stylized, I do not believe that these qualities are necessarily bad or even subliterary. Instead, it seems obvious that a genre which favours style and form, and privileges the literary element of parody throughout, cannot be considered anything less than literary.

As I have shown, parody was largely responsible for the creation of detective fiction, and almost immediately became an element of the formula itself. Various strains within the genre, including female detective fiction and hard-boiled detective fiction, owe their inception to parody, and the inherent self-consciousness of detective fiction is what saves it from being completely subsumed by the postmodernists.

While some people might cringe at the thought of delineating detective fiction as literature, I suggest that there is a large semantic grey area between the definition of literature as a qualitative term, and the

denotative description which merely suggests nonfactual wordplay. It is not my purpose to define the term "literature" here. My object has been to show that while detective fiction may superficially appear to be formulaic and easily dismissed, its self-consciousness, self-reflexivity, and deliberate use of many elements of parody imply that it is truly one of the most conscious of literary genres.

Endnotes

1. See W. H. Auden's "The Guilty Vicarage" and George Grella's "The Formal Detective Novel," both found in Detective Fiction, ed. Winks. Also see Colin Watson's Snobbery with Violence.

2. Dennis Porter, in his book The Pursuit of Crime, particularly shines on this topic. George Grella's "The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel" (Winks) is also informative, as is F. R. Jameson's "On Raymond Chandler" in The Poetics of Murder (Most).

3. John G. Cawelti, Adventure, Mystery and Romance; Ernst Kaemmel, "Literature Under the Table: The Detective Novel and its Social Mission" in The Poetics of Murder, 55-61.

4. Examples of this sort of argument can be found stated with the most economy in Dennis Porter's The Pursuit of Crime, especially in Chapter 6, entitled "Literature and Ideology." Cawelti is also useful in this regard (Adventure, Mystery and Romance).

5. Semioticians, philosophers and postmodernists flock to this area. Umberto Eco's "Narrative Structures in Fleming" in The Role of the Reader: Exploration in the Semiotics of

Texts (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), Roger Caillois's "The Detective Novel as Game" (1947) in The Poetics of Murder (Most), and Bernard Suits' "The Detective Story: A Case Study of Games in Literature" in Canadian Review of Comparative Literature Vol. XII, No. 2, June 1985, 200-219 are all good examples of this line of inquiry.

6. Hanna Charney, The Detective Novel of Manners: Hedonism, Morality, and the Life of Reason. (London: Associated Universities Press, 1981).

7. Michael Holquist in "Whodunit and other Questions: Metaphysical Detective Stories in Postwar Fiction" in The Poetics of Murder (Most), Dennis Porter in The Pursuit of Crime, and Stefano Tani in The Doomed Detective all predict that the genre will be subsumed by the postmodernists. Gavin Lambert, in The Dangerous Edge sees the emergence of factual crime accounts like In Cold Blood as a signal of the end of detective fiction as we've known it (p.x). Julian Symons believes detective novels will be supplanted by crime novels in popularity (Bloody Murder 235-6), and John Cawelti agrees, pointing to Puzo's The Godfather as an example of the shift of focus from solitary criminal to gangland syndicates (Adventure, Mystery and Romance 51).

8. Alain Robbe-Grillet, For A New Novel (New York: Grove Press, 1965) 135-6.

9. According to Stefano Tani, the term was originated by William V. Spanos in "The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Postmodern Literary Imagination" Boundary 2, (Fall 1972). Spanos defines the term in this way:

> the paradigmatic archetype of the postmodern literary imagination. . . the formal purpose of which is to "detect" and/or to psychoanalyze in order to violently frustrate it by refusing to solve the crime (or find the cause of the neurosis). (154)

This is quoted by Tani on page 160, Note #40.

10. I am not trying to claim that Berger is a superior artist to Eco. Instead, I want to show that Berger has chosen the proper form of detective literature to parody. The hard-boiled novel is no stranger to parody; like all facets of detective fiction, parody has been influential in the development of the formula. Dashiell Hammett is considered the creator of the hard-boiled detective novel; yet, in an exploration of his seemingly seminal works in the genre, we can already see parody and self-reflexiveness at work. As Sinda Gregory says, in his discussion of Hammett:

> . . . at the same time that his books are almost universally acclaimed as the best of American detective fiction, they are also among the best examples of the anti-

> detective novel. As Hammett maintained the outward form and pattern of the hard-boiled story, he also infused it with irony, paradox, parody, and humour so that, like the Maltese falcon, all is not as it seems. Thus the black-and-white appeal of the detective story--a detective who pursues, a villain who eludes, a mystery created by evil and dissipated by good--is present in Hammett's fiction with disquieting contradictions that keep the reader slightly off balance.(Private Investigations, p.12)

Hard-boiled detective fiction has already taken the necessary steps away from the stylized formula of the classical tradition by privileging reality and the illogicality that is real life. From this vantage point, rather than that of the classical ratiocinative recipe, postmodernist "anti-detective" novels are able to exploit the chaos which is our world. Therefore, to succeed with their postmodernist intentions, writers must choose the hard-boiled strain of detective fiction.

Works Consulted

I. Primary Sources

To study formulaic literature, it is necessary to read widely within the genre. In the past eighteen months I have read approximately 300 detective novels. While all the novels contributed toward a general overview of the genre, listing all of them would be counterproductive. Therefore, I am only listing novels which are either specifically mentioned or directly implicated in the thesis.

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